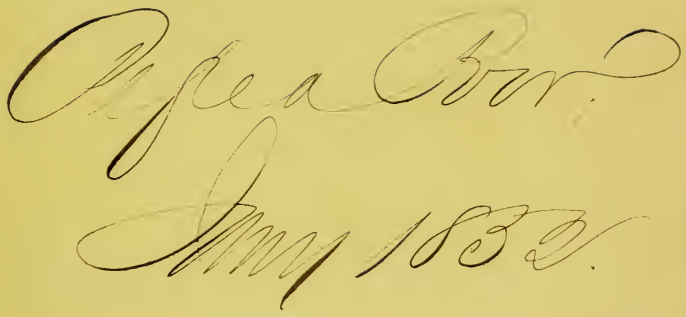

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THE

WIDE, WIDE WORLD.

BY

ELIZABETH WETHERELL.

SIXTH EDITION.

Here at the portal thou dost stand,
And with thy little hand
Thou openest the mysterious gate,
Into the future's undiscovered land
I see its valves expand,
As at the touch of FATE!
Into those realms of Love and Hate.

LONGFELLOW

VOLUME I.

NEW-YORK:
GEORGE P. PUTNAM, 155 BROADWAY.

1851.

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THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

Enjoy the spring of love and youth,
To some good angel leave the rest,
For time will teach thee soon the truth,
"There are no birds in last year's nest."
LONGFELLOW.

"MAMMA, what was that I heard papa saying to you this morning about his lawsuit?"

"I cannot tell you just now. Ellen, pick up that shawl, and spread it over me."

"Mamma!—are you cold in this warm room?"

"A little,—there, that will do. Now, my daughter, let me be quiet awhile—don't disturb me."

There was no one else in the room. Driven thus to her own resources Ellen betook herself to the window and sought amusement there. The prospect without gave little promise of it. Rain was falling, and made the street and everything in it look dull and gloomy. The foot-passengers plashed through the water, and the horses and carriages plashed through the mud; gaiety had forsaken the side-walks, and equipages were few, and the people that were out were plainly there only because they could not help it. But yet Ellen, having seriously set herself to study everything that passed, presently became engaged in her occupation; and her thoughts travelling dreamily from one thing to another, she sat for a long time with her little face pressed against the window-frame, perfectly regardless of all but the moving world without.

Daylight gradually faded away, and the street wore a more and more gloomy aspect. The rain poured, and now only an

occasional carriage or footstep disturbed the sound of its steady pattering. Yet still Ellen sat with her face glued to the window as if spell-bound, gazing out at every dusky form that passed, as though it had some strange interest for her. At length, in the distance, light after light began to appear; presently Ellen could see the dim figure of the lamplighter crossing the street, from side to side, with his ladder;—then he drew near enough for her to watch him as he hooked his ladder on the lamp-irons, ran up and lit the lamp, then shouldered the ladder and marched off quick, the light glancing on his wet oil-skin hat, rough great coat and lantern, and on the pavement and iron railings. The veriest moth could not have followed the light with more perseverance than did Ellen's eyes—till the lamplighter gradually disappeared from view, and the last lamp she could see was lit; and not till then did it occur to her that there was such a place as in-doors. She took her face from the window. The room was dark and cheerless; and Ellen felt stiff and chilly. However, she made her way to the fire, and having found the poker, she applied it gently to the Liverpool coal with such good effect that a bright ruddy blaze sprang up, and lighted the whole room. Ellen smiled at the result of her experiment. "That is something like," said she to herself; "who says I can't poke the fire? Now, let us see if I can't do something else. Do but see how those chairs are standing—one wouldthink we had had a sewing-circle here—there, go back to your places,—that looks a little better; now these curtains must come down, and I may as well shut the shutters too—and now this table-cloth must be content to hang straight, and mamma's box and the books must lie in their places, and not all helter-skelter.—Now, I wish mamma would wake up; I should think she might. I don't believe she is asleep either—she don't look as if she was."

Ellen was right in this; her mother's face did not wear the look of sleep, nor indeed of repose at all; the lips were compressed, and the brow not calm. To try, however, whether she was asleep or no, and with the half-acknowledged intent to rouse her at all events, Ellen knelt down by her side, and laid her face close to her mother's on the pillow. But this failed to draw either word or sign. After

a minute or two Ellen tried stroking her mother's cheek very gently;—and this succeeded, for Mrs. Montgomery arrested the little hand as it passed her lips, and kissed it fondly two or three times.

"I haven't disturbed you, mamma, have I?" said Ellen.

Without replying, Mrs. Montgomery raised herself to a sitting posture, and lifting both hands to her face pushed back the hair from her forehead and temples, with a gesture which Ellen knew meant that she was making up her mind to some disagreeable or painful effort. Then taking both Ellen's hands, as she still knelt before her, she gazed in her face with a look even more fond than usual, Ellen thought, but much sadder too; though Mrs. Montgomery's cheerfulness had always been of a serious kind.

"What question was that you were asking me awhile ago, my daughter?"

"I thought, mamma, I heard papa telling you this morning, or yesterday, that he had lost that lawsuit."

"You heard right, Ellen,—he has lost it," said Mrs. Montgomery, sadly.

"Are you sorry, mamma?—does it trouble you?"

"You know, my dear, that I am not apt to concern myself overmuch about the gain or the loss of money. I believe my Heavenly Father will give me what is good for me."

"Then, mamma, why are you troubled?"

"Because, my child, I cannot carry out this principle in other matters, and leave quietly my *all* in his hands."

"What is the matter, dear mother? What makes you look so?

"This lawsuit, Ellen, has brought upon us more trouble than I ever thought a lawsuit could—the loss of it, I mean."

"How, mamma?"

"It has caused an entire change of all our plans. Your father says he is too poor now to stay here any longer; and he has agreed to go soon on some government or military business to Europe."

"Well, mamma, that is bad, but he has been away a great deal before, and I am sure we were always very happy?"

"But, Ellen, he thinks now, and the doctor thinks too,

that it is very important for my health that I should go with him."

"Does he, mamma?—and do you mean to go?"

"I am afraid I must, my dear child."

"Not, and leave *me*, mother?"

The imploring look of mingled astonishment, terror, and sorrow with which Ellen uttered these words, took from her mother all power of replying. It was not necessary; her little daughter understood only too well the silent answer of her eye. With a wild cry she flung her arms round her mother, and hiding her face in her lap gave way to a violent burst of grief that seemed for a few moments as if it would rend soul and body in twain. For her passions were by nature very strong, and by education very imperfectly controlled; and time, "that rider that breaks youth," had not as yet tried his hand upon her. And Mrs. Montgomery, in spite of the fortitude and calmness to which she had steeled herself, bent down over her, and folding her arms about her yielded to sorrow deeper still, and for a little while scarcely less violent in its expression than Ellen's own.

Alas! she had too good reason. She knew that the chance of her ever returning to shield the little creature who was nearest her heart from the future evils and snares of life was very, very small. She had at first absolutely refused to leave Ellen, when her husband proposed it; declaring that she would rather stay with her and die than take the chance of recovery at such a cost. But her physician assured her she could not live long without a change of climate; Captain Montgomery urged that it was better to submit to a temporary separation, than to cling obstinately to her child for a few months and then leave her forever; said he must himself go speedily to France, and that now was her best opportunity; assuring her however that his circumstances would not permit him to take Ellen along, but that she would be secure of a happy home with his sister during her mother's absence; and to the pressure of argument Captain Montgomery added the weight of authority—insisting on her compliance. Conscience also asked Mrs. Montgomery whether she had a *right* to neglect any chance of life that was offered her; and at last she yielded to the combined influ-

ence of motives no one of which would have had power sufficient to move her, and though with a secret consciousness it would be in vain, she consented to do as her friends wished. And it was for Ellen's sake she did it after all.

Nothing but necessity had given her the courage to open the matter to her little daughter. She had foreseen and endeavored to prepare herself for Ellen's anguish; but nature was too strong for her, and they clasped each other in a convulsive embrace while tears fell like rain.

It was some minutes before Mrs. Montgomery recollected herself, and then though she struggled hard she could not immediately regain her composure. But Ellen's deep sobs at length fairly alarmed her; she saw the necessity, for both their sakes, of putting a stop to this state of violent excitement; self-command was restored at once.

"Ellen! Ellen! listen to me," she said; "my child,—this is not right. Remember, my darling, who it is that brings this sorrow upon us—though we *must* sorrow, we must not rebel."

Ellen sobbed more gently; but that and the mute pressure of her arms was her only answer.

"You will hurt both yourself and me, my daughter, if you cannot command yourself. Remember, dear Ellen, God sends no trouble upon his children but in love; and though we cannot see how, he will no doubt make all this work for our good."

"I know it, dear mother," sobbed Ellen, "but it's just as hard!"

Mrs. Montgomery's own heart answered so readily to the truth of Ellen's words that for the moment she could not speak.

"Try, my daughter," she said after a pause,—"try to compose yourself. I am afraid you will make me worse, Ellen, if you cannot,—I am indeed."

Ellen had plenty of faults, but amidst them all love to her mother was the strongest feeling her heart knew. It had power enough now to move her as nothing else could have done; and exerting all her self-command, of which she had sometimes a good deal, she *did* calm herself; ceased sobbing; wiped her eyes; arose from her crouching posture, and seating herself on the sofa by her mother, and laying her

head on her bosom, she listened quietly to all the soothing words and cheering considerations with which Mrs. Montgomery endeavored to lead her to take a more hopeful view of the subject. All she could urge however had but very partial success, though the conversation was prolonged far into the evening. Ellen said little, and did not weep any more; but in secret her heart refused consolation.

Long before this the servant had brought in the tea-things. Nobody regarded it at the time, but the little kettle hissing away on the fire now by chance attracted Ellen's attention, and she suddenly recollected her mother had had no tea. To make her mother's tea was Ellen's regular business. She treated it as a very grave affair, and loved it as one of the pleasantest in the course of the day. She used in the first place to make sure that the kettle really boiled; then she carefully poured some water into the tea-pot and rinsed it, both to make it clean and to make it hot; then she knew exactly how much tea to put into the tiny little tea-pot, which was just big enough to hold two cups of tea, and having poured a very little boiling water to it, she used to set it by the side of the fire while she made half a slice of toast. How careful Ellen was about that toast! The bread must not be cut too thick, nor too thin; the fire must, if possible, burn clear and bright, and she herself held the bread on a fork, just at the right distance from the coals to get nicely browned without burning. When this was done to her satisfaction, (and if the first piece failed she would take another,) she filled up the little tea-pot from the boiling kettle, and proceeded to make a cup of tea. She knew, and was very careful to put in, just the quantity of milk and sugar that her mother liked; and then she used to carry the tea and toast on a little tray to her mother's side, and very often held it there for her while she eat. All this Ellen did with the zeal that love gives, and though the same thing was to be gone over every night of the year, she was never wearied. It was a real pleasure; she had the greatest satisfaction in seeing that the little her mother could eat was prepared for her in the nicest possible manner; she knew her hands made it taste better; her mother often said so.

But this evening other thoughts had driven this important business quite out of poor Ellen's mind. Now, however,

when her eyes fell upon the little kettle, she recollected her mother had not had her tea, and must want it very much; and silently slipping off the sofa she set about getting it as usual. There was no doubt this time whether the kettle boiled or no; it had been hissing for an hour and more, calling as loud as it could to somebody to come and make the tea. So Ellen made it, and then began the toast. But she began to think too, as she watched it, how few more times she would be able to do so—how soon her pleasant tea-makings would be over—and the desolate feeling of separation began to come upon her before the time. These thoughts were too much for poor Ellen; the thick tears gathered so fast she could not see what she was doing; and she had no more than just turned the slice of bread on the fork when the sickness of heart quite overcame her; she could not go on. Toast and fork and all dropped from her hand into the ashes; and rushing to her mother's side, who was now lying down again, and throwing herself upon her, she burst into another fit of sorrow; not so violent as the former, but with a touch of hopelessness in it which went yet more to her mother's heart. Passion in the first said, "I cannot;" despair now seemed to say, "I must."

But Mrs. Montgomery was too exhausted to either share or soothe Ellen's agitation. She lay in suffering silence; till after some time she said faintly, "Ellen, my love, I cannot bear this much longer."

Ellen was immediately brought to herself by these words. She arose, sorry and ashamed that she should have given occasion for them; and tenderly kissing her mother, assured her most sincerely and resolutely that she would not do so again. In a few minutes she was calm enough to finish making the tea, and having toasted another piece of bread, she brought it to her mother. Mrs. Montgomery swallowed a cup of tea, but no toast could be eaten that night.

Both remained silent and quiet awhile after this, till the clock struck ten. "You had better go to bed, my daughter," said Mrs. Montgomery.

"I will, mamma."

"Do you think you can read me a little before you go?"

"Yes, indeed, mamma;" and Ellen brought the book; "where shall I read?"

"The twenty-third psalm."

Ellen began it, and went through it steadily and slowly, though her voice quavered a little.

"'The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.'

"'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters.'

"'He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.'

"'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,'

"'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.'

"'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.'"

Long before she had finished Ellen's eyes were full, and her heart too. "If I only could feel these words as mamma does!" she said to herself. She did not dare look up till the traces of tears had passed away; then she saw that her mother was asleep. Those first sweet words had fallen like balm upon the sore heart; and mind and body had instantly found rest together.

Ellen breathed the lightest possible kiss upon her forehead, and stole quietly out of the room to her own little bed.

CHAPTER II.

Not all the whispers that the soft winds utter
Speak earthly things—
There mingleth there, sometimes, a gentle flutter
Of angel's wings.

AMY LATHROP.

SORROW and excitement made Ellen's eyelids heavy, and she slept late on the following morning. The great dressing-bell waked her. She started up with a confused notion that something was the matter; there was a weight on her heart that was very strange to it. A moment was enough to bring it all back; and she threw herself again on her pillow, yielding helplessly to the grief she had twice been obliged to control the evening before. Yet love was stronger than grief still, and she was careful to allow no sound to escape her that could reach the ears of her mother, who slept in the next room. Her resolve was firm to grieve her no more with useless expressions of sorrow; to keep it to herself as much as possible. But this very thought that she must keep it to herself, gave an edge to poor Ellen's grief, and the convulsive clasp of her little arms round the pillow plainly showed that it needed none.

The breakfast-bell again startled her, and she remembered she must not be too late down stairs, or her mother might inquire and find out the reason. "I will *not* trouble mother—I will not—I will not," she resolved to herself as she got out of bed, though the tears fell faster as she said so. Dressing was sad work to Ellen to-day; it went on very heavily. Tears dropped into the water as she stooped her head to the basin; and she hid her face in the towel to cry, instead of making the ordinary use of it. But the usual duties were dragged through at last, and she went to the

window. "I'll not go down till papa is gone," she thought, "he'll ask me what is the matter with my eyes."

Ellen opened the window. The rain was over; the lovely light of a fair September morning was beautifying everything it shone upon. Ellen had been accustomed to amuse herself a good deal at this window, though nothing was to be seen from it but an ugly city prospect of back walls of houses, with the yards belonging to them, and a bit of narrow street. But she had watched the people that showed themselves at the windows, and the children that played in the yards, and the women that went to the pumps, till she had become pretty well acquainted with the neighborhood; and though they were for the most part dingy, dirty, and disagreeable—women, children, houses, and all—she certainly had taken a good deal of interest in their proceedings. It was all gone now. She could not bear to look at them; she felt as if it made her sick; and turning away her eyes she lifted them to the bright sky above her head, and gazed into its clear depth of blue till she almost forgot that there was such a thing as a city in the world. Little white clouds were chasing across it, driven by the fresh wind that was blowing away Ellen's hair from her face, and cooling her hot cheeks. That wind could not have been long in coming from the place of woods and flowers, it was so sweet still. Ellen looked till, she didn't know why, she felt calmed and soothed,—as if somebody was saying to her softly, "Cheer up, my child, cheer up;—things are not as bad as they might be:—things will be better." Her attention was attracted at length by voices below; she looked down, and saw there, in one of the yards, a poor deformed child, whom she had often noticed before, and always with sorrowful interest. Besides his bodily infirmity, he had a further claim on her sympathy, in having lost his mother within a few months. Ellen's heart was easily touched this morning; she felt for him very much. "Poor, poor little fellow!" she thought; "he's a great deal worse off than I am. *His* mother is dead; mine is only going away for a few months—not forever—oh, what a difference! and then the joy of coming back again!" poor Ellen was weeping already at the thought—"and I will do, oh, how much! while she is gone—I'll do more than she can possibly expect from me—I'll astonish her—I'll delight her—I'll work harder

than ever I did in my life before—I'll mend all my faults, and give her so much pleasure! But oh! if she only needn't go away! Oh, mamma!" Tears of mingled sweet and bitter were poured out fast, but the bitter had the largest share.

The breakfast-table was still standing, and her father gone, when Ellen went down stairs. Mrs. Montgomery welcomed her with her usual quiet smile, and held out her hand. Ellen tried to smile in answer, but she was glad to hide her face in her mother's bosom; and the long close embrace was too close and too long;—it told of sorrow as well as love; and tears fell from the eyes of each that the other did not see.

"Need I go to school to-day, mamma?" whispered Ellen.

"No; I spoke to your father about that; you shall not go any more; we will be together now while we can."

Ellen wanted to ask how long that would be, but could not make up her mind to it.

"Sit down, daughter, and take some breakfast."

"Have you done, mamma?"

"No; I waited for you."

"Thank you, dear mamma," with another embrace, "how good you are; but I don't think I want any."

They drew their chairs to the table, but it was plain neither had much heart to eat; although Mrs. Montgomery with her own hands laid on Ellen's plate half of the little bird that had been broiled for her own breakfast. The half was too much for each of them.

"What made you so late this morning, daughter?"

"I got up late, in the first place, mamma; and then I was a long time at the window."

"At the window! were you examining into your neighbor's affairs as usual?" said Mrs. Montgomery, surprised that it should have been so.

"Oh, no, mamma, I didn't look at them at all—except poor little Billy;—I was looking at the sky."

"And what did you see there that pleased you so much?"

"I don't know, mamma; it looked so lovely and peaceful—that pure blue spread over my head, and the little white clouds flying across it—I loved to look at it; it seemed to do me good."

"Could you look at it, Ellen, without thinking of Him who made it?"

"No, mamma," said Ellen, ceasing her breakfast, and now speaking with difficulty; "I did think of Him; perhaps that was the reason."

"And what did you think of Him, daughter?"

"I hoped, mamma—I felt—I thought—He would take care of me," said Ellen, bursting into tears, and throwing her arms again round her mother.

"He will, my dear daughter, he will if you will only put your trust in Him, Ellen."

Ellen struggled hard to get back her composure, and after a few minutes succeeded.

"Mamma, will you tell me what you mean exactly by my 'putting my trust' in Him."

"Don't you trust me, Ellen?"

"Certainly, mamma."

"How do you trust me?—in what?"

"Why mamma:—in the first place I trust every word you say—entirely—I know nothing could be truer; if you were to tell me black is white, mamma, I should think my eyes had been mistaken. Then everything you tell or advise me to do, I know it is right, perfectly. And I always feel safe when you are near me, because I know you'll take care of me. And I am glad to think I belong to you, and you have the management of me entirely, and I needn't manage myself, because I know I can't; and if I could, I'd rather you would, mamma."

"My daughter, it is just so; it is *just* so: that I wish you to trust in God. He is truer, wiser, stronger, kinder, by far, than I am, even if I could be always with you; and what will you do when I am away from you?—and what would you do, my child, if I were to be parted from you for ever?"

"O, mamma!" said Ellen, bursting into tears, and clasping her arms round her mother again—"O dear mamma, don't talk about it!"

Her mother fondly returned her caress, and one or two tears fell on Ellen's head as she did so, but that was all, and she said no more. Feeling severely the effects of the excitement and anxiety of the preceding day and night, she now stretched herself on the sofa and lay quite still. Ellen placed herself on a little bench at her side, with her back to the head of the sofa, that her mother might not see her face;

and possessing herself of one of her hands, sat with her little head resting upon her mother, as quiet as she. They remained thus for two or three hours, without speaking; and Mrs. Montgomery was part of the time slumbering; but now and then a tear ran down the side of the sofa and dropped on the carpet where Ellen sat; and now and then her lips were softly pressed to the hand she held, as if they would grow there.

The doctor's entrance at last disturbed them. Doctor Green found his patient decidedly worse than he had reason to expect; and his sagacious eye had not passed back and forth many times between the mother and daughter before he saw how it was. He made no remark upon it, however, but continued for some moments a pleasant chatty conversation which he had begun with Mrs. Montgomery. He then called Ellen to him; he had rather taken a fancy to her.

"Well, Miss Ellen," he said, rubbing one of her hands in his; "what do you think of this fine scheme of mine?"

"What scheme, sir?"

"Why, this scheme of sending this sick lady over the water to get well; what do you think of it, eh?"

"*Will* it make her quite well, do you think, sir?" asked Ellen earnestly.

"'Will it make her well!' to be sure it will; do you think I don't know better than to send people all the way across the ocean for nothing? Who do you think would want Dr. Green if he sent people on wild-goose chases in that fashion?"

"Will she have to stay long there before she is cured, sir?" asked Ellen.

"O, that I can't tell; that depends entirely on circumstances—perhaps longer, perhaps shorter. But now, Miss Ellen, I've got a word of business to say to you; you know you agreed to be my little nurse. Mrs. Nurse, this lady whom I put under your care the other day, is'nt quite as well as she ought to be this morning; I'm afraid you haven't taken proper care of her; she looks to me as if she had been too much excited. I've a notion she has been secretly taking half a bottle of wine, or reading some furious kind of a novel, or something of that sort—you understand?—Now mind, Mrs. Nurse," said the doctor, changing his tone—"she

must not be excited—you must take care that she is not—it isn't good for her. You mustn't let her talk much, or laugh much, or cry at all, on any account; she mustn't be worried in the least—will you remember? Now you know what I shall expect of you; you must be very careful—if that piece of toast of your's should chance to get burned, one of these fine evenings I won't answer for the consequences. Good bye," said he, shaking Ellen's hand—"you needn't look sober about it,—all you have to do is to let your mamma be as much like an oyster as possible;—you understand? Good-bye." And Dr. Green took his leave.

"Poor woman!" said the doctor to himself as he went down stairs (he was a humane man). "I wonder if she'll live till she gets to the other side! That's a nice little girl too. Poor child! poor child!"

Both mother and daughter silently acknowledged the justice of the doctor's advice and determined to follow it. By common consent, as it seemed, each for several days avoided bringing the subject of sorrow to the other's mind; though no doubt it was constantly present to both. It was not spoken of—indeed, little of any kind was spoken of, but that never. Mrs. Montgomery was doubtless employed during this interval in preparing for what she believed was before her; endeavoring to resign herself and her child to Him in whose hands they were, and struggling to withdraw her affections from a world which she had a secret misgiving she was fast leaving. As for Ellen, the doctor's warning had served to strengthen the resolve she had already made, that she would not distress her mother with the sight of her sorrow; and she kept it, as far as she could. She did not let her mother see but very few tears, and those were quiet ones; though she drooped her head like a withered flower, and went about the house with an air of submissive sadness that tried her mother sorely. But when she was alone, and knew no one could see, sorrow had its way; and then there were sometimes agonies of grief that would almost have broken Mrs. Montgomery's resolution had she known them.

This, however, could not last. Ellen was a child, and of most buoyant and elastic spirit naturally; it was not for one sorrow, however great, to utterly crush her. It would have

taken years to do that. Moreover, she entertained not the slightest hope of being able by any means to alter her father's will. She regarded the dreaded evil as an inevitable thing. But though she was at first overwhelmed with sorrow, and for some days evidently pined under it sadly, hope at length *would* come back to her little heart; and no sooner in again hope began to smooth the roughest, and soften the hardest, and touch the dark spots with light, in Ellen's future. The thoughts which had just passed through her head that first morning as she stood at her window, now came back again. Thoughts of wonderful improvement to be made during her mother's absence;—of unheard-of efforts to learn and amend, which should all be crowned with success; and above all, thoughts of that "coming home," when all these attainments and accomplishments should be displayed to her mother's delighted eyes, and her exertions receive their long desired reward;—they made Ellen's heart beat, and her eyes swim, and even brought a smile once more upon her lips. Mrs. Montgomery was rejoiced to see the change; she felt that as much time had already been given to sorrow as they could afford to lose, and she had not known exactly how to proceed. Ellen's amended looks and spirits greatly relieved her.

"What are you thinking about, Ellen?" said she, one morning.

Ellen was sewing, and while busy at her work her mother had two or three times observed a slight smile pass over her face. Ellen looked up, still smiling, and answered, "O, mamma, I was thinking of different things—things that I mean to do while you are gone."

"And what are these things?" inquired her mother.

"O, mamma, it wouldn't do to tell you beforehand; I want to surprise you with them when you come back."

A slight shudder passed over Mrs. Montgomery's frame, but Ellen did not see it. Mrs. Montgomery was silent. Ellen presently introduced another subject.

"Mamma, what kind of a person is my aunt?"

"I do not know; I have never seen her."

"How has that happened, mamma?"

"Your aunt has always lived in a remote country town, and I have been very much confined to two or three cities,

and your father's long and repeated absences made travelling impossible to me."

Ellen thought, but she didn't say it, that it was very odd her father should not sometimes, when he *was* in the country, have gone to see his relations, and taken her mother with him.

"What is my aunt's name, mamma?"

"I think you must have heard that already, Ellen; Fortune Emerson."

"Emerson! I thought she was papa's sister?"

"So she is."

"Then how comes her name not to be Montgomery?"

"She is only his half-sister; the daughter of his mother, not the daughter of his father."

"I am very sorry for that," said Ellen gravely.

"Why, my daughter?"

"I am afraid she will not be so likely to love me."

"You mustn't think so my child. Her loving or not loving you will depend solely and entirely upon yourself, Ellen. Don't forget that. If you are a good child, and make it your daily care to do your duty, she cannot help liking you, be she what she may; and on the other hand, if she have all the will in the world to love you she cannot do it unless you will let her—it all depends on your behaviour."

"Oh, mamma, I can't help wishing dear aunt Bessy was alive, and I was going to her."

Many a time the same wish had passed through Mrs. Montgomery's mind! But she kept down her rising heart, and went on calmly.

"You must not expect, my child, to find any body as indulgent as I am, or as ready to overlook and excuse your faults. It would be unreasonable to look for it; and you must not think hardly of your aunt when you find she is not your mother; but then it will be your own fault if she does not love you, in time, truly and tenderly. See that you render her all the respect and obedience you could render me; that is your bounden duty; she will stand in my place while she has the care of you, remember that, Ellen; and remember too that she will deserve more gratitude at your hands for showing you kindness than I do, because she cannot have the same feeling of love to make trouble easy."

"O, no, mamma," said Ellen, "I don't think so; it's that very feeling of love that I am grateful for; I don't care a fig for anything people do for me without that."

"But you can make her love you, Ellen, if you try."

"Well, I'll try mamma."

"And don't be discouraged. Perhaps you may be disappointed in first appearances, but never mind that; have patience; and let your motto be, (if there's any occasion,) overcome evil with good. Will you put that among the things you mean to do while I am gone?" said Mrs. Montgomery with a smile.

"I'll try, dear mamma."

"You will succeed if you try dear, never fear; if you apply yourself in your trying to the only unfailing source of wisdom and strength; to Him without whom you can do nothing."

There was silence for a little.

"What sort of a place is it where my aunt lives?" asked Ellen.

"Your father says it is a very pleasant place; he says the country is beautiful, and very healthy, and full of charming walks and rides. You have never lived in the country; I think you will enjoy it very much."

"Then it is not a town?" said Ellen.

"No; it is not far from the town of Thirlwall, but your aunt lives in the open country. Your father says she is a capital housekeeper, and that you will learn more, and be in all respects a great deal happier and better off than you would be in a boarding-school here or anywhere."

Ellen's heart secretly questioned the truth of this last assertion very much.

"Is there any school near?" she asked.

"Your father says there was an excellent one in Thirlwall when he was there."

"Mamma," said Ellen, "I think the greatest pleasure I shall have while you are gone will be writing to you. I have been thinking of it a good deal. I mean to tell you everything—absolutely everything, mamma. You know there will be nobody for me to talk to as I do to you;" Ellen's words came out with difficulty; "and when I feel badly, I shall just

shut myself up and write to you." She hid her face in her mother's lap.

"I count upon it, my dear daughter; it will make quite as much the pleasure of my life, Ellen, as of yours."

"But then, mother," said Ellen, brushing away the tears from her eyes, "it will be so long before my letters can get to you! The things I want you to know right away, you won't know perhaps in a month."

"That's no matter, daughter; they will be just as good when they do get to me. Never think of that; write every day, and all manner of things that concern you,—just as particularly as if you were speaking to me."

"And you'll write to me too, mamma?"

"Indeed I will—when I can. But Ellen, you say that when I am away and cannot hear you, there will be nobody to supply my place. Perhaps it will be so indeed; but then, my daughter, let it make you seek that friend who is never far away nor out of hearing. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. You know he has said of his children: 'Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.'"

"But, mamma," said Ellen, her eyes filling instantly,—"you know he is not my friend in the same way that he is yours." And hiding her face again, she added, "Oh, I wish he was!"

"You know the way to make him so, Ellen. *He* is willing; it only rests with you. O, my child, my child! if losing your mother might be the means of finding you that better friend, I should be quite willing—and glad to go—for ever."

There was silence, only broken by Ellen's sobs. Mrs. Montgomery's voice had trembled, and her face was now covered with her hands; but she was not weeping; she was seeking a better relief where it had long been her habit to seek and find it. Both soon resumed their usual composure, and the employments which had been broken off, but neither chose to renew the conversation. Dinner, sleeping, and company, prevented their having another opportunity during the rest of the day.

But when evening came, they were again left to themselves. Captain Montgomery was away, which indeed was the case

most of the time; friends had taken their departure; the curtains were down, the lamp lit, the little room looked cozy and comfortable; the servant had brought the tea-things, and withdrawn, and the mother and daughter were happily alone. Mrs. Montgomery knew that such occasions were numbered, and fast drawing to an end, and she felt each one to be very precious. She now lay on her couch, with her face partially shaded, and her eyes fixed upon her little daughter, who was preparing the tea. She watched her, with thoughts and feelings not to be spoken, as the little figure went back and forward between the table and the fire, and the light shining full upon her busy face, showed that Ellen's whole soul was in her beloved duty. Tears would fall as she looked, and were not wiped away; but when Ellen, having finished her work, brought with a satisfied face the little tray of tea and toast to her mother, there was no longer any sign of them left; Mrs. Montgomery arose with her usual kind smile, to show her gratitude by honoring as far as possible what Ellen had provided.

"You have more appetite to-night, mamma."

"I am very glad, daughter," replied her mother, "to see that you have made up your mind to bear patiently this evil that has come upon us. I am glad for your sake, and I am glad for mine; and I am glad too because we have a great deal to do and no time to lose in doing it."

"What have we so much to do, mamma?" said Ellen.

"O, many things," said her mother; "you will see. But now, Ellen, if there is anything you wish to talk to me about, any question you want to ask, anything you would like particularly to have, or to have done for you,—I want you to tell it me as soon as possible, now while we can attend to it,—for by and by perhaps we shall be hurried."

"Mamma," said Ellen, with brightening eyes, "there is one thing I have thought of that I should like to have, shall I tell it you now?"

"Yes."

"Mamma, you know I shall want to be writing a great deal; wouldn't it be a good thing for me to have a little box with some pens in it, and an inkstand, and some paper and wafers? Because, mamma, you know I shall be among strangers, at first, and I shan't feel like asking them for these

things as often as I shall want them, and may be they wouldn't want to let me have them if I did."

"I have thought of that already, daughter," said Mrs. Montgomery, with a smile and a sigh. "I will certainly take care that you are well provided in that respect before you go."

"How am I to go, mamma?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, who will go with me? You know I can't go alone, mamma."

"No, my daughter, I'll not send you alone. But your father says it is impossible for *him* to take the journey at present, and it is yet more impossible for me. There is no help for it, daughter, but we must intrust you to the care of some friend going that way;—but he that holds the winds and waters in the hollow of his hand can take care of you without any of our help, and it is to his keeping above all that I shall commit you."

Ellen made no remark, and seemed much less surprised and troubled than her mother had expected. In truth, the greater evil swallowed up the less. Parting from her mother, and for so long a time, it seemed to her comparatively a matter of little importance with whom she went, or how, or where. Except for this, the taking a long journey under a stranger's care would have been a dreadful thing to her.

"Do you know yet who it will be that I shall go with, mamma?"

"Not yet; but it will be necessary to take the first good opportunity, for I cannot go till I have seen you off; and it is thought very desirable that I should get to sea before the severe weather comes."

It was with a pang that these words were spoken, and heard, but neither showed it to the other.

"It has comforted me greatly, my dear child, that you have shown yourself so submissive and patient under this affliction. I should scarcely have been able to endure it if you had not exerted self-control. You have behaved beautifully."

This was almost too much for poor Ellen. It required her utmost stretch of self-control to keep within any bounds of composure; and for some moments her flushed cheek, quivering lip, and heaving bosom, told what a tumult her

mother's words had raised. Mrs. Montgomery saw she had gone too far, and willing to give both Ellen and herself time to recover, she laid her head on the pillow again and closed her eyes. Many thoughts coming thick upon one another presently filled her mind, and half an hour had passed before she again recollected what she had meant to say. She opened her eyes; Ellen was sitting at a little distance, staring into the fire; evidently as deep in meditation as her mother had been.

"Ellen," said Mrs. Montgomery, "did you ever fancy what kind of a Bible you would like to have?"

"A Bible! mamma," said Ellen, with sparkling eyes, "do you mean to give me a Bible?"

Mrs. Montgomery smiled.

"But, mamma," said Ellen gently, "I thought you couldn't afford it?"

"I have said so, and truly," answered her mother; "and hitherto you have been able to use mine, but I will not leave you now without one. I will find ways and means," said Mrs. Montgomery, smiling again.

"O mamma, thank you!" said Ellen, delighted; "how glad I shall be!" And after a pause of consideration, she added, "Mamma, I never thought much about what sort of a one I should like, couldn't I tell better if I were to see the different kinds in the store?"

"Perhaps so. Well, the first day that the weather is fine enough and I am well enough, I will go out with you and we will see about it."

"I am afraid Dr. Green won't let you, mamma."

"I shall not ask him. I want to get you a Bible, and some other things that I will not leave you without, and nobody can it do but myself. I shall go, if I possibly can."

"What other things, mamma?" asked Ellen, very much interested in the subject.

"I don't think it will do to tell you to-night," said Mrs. Montgomery, smiling. I foresee that you and I should be kept awake quite too late if we were to enter upon it just now. We will leave it till to-morrow. Now read to me, love, and then to bed."

Ellen obeyed; and went to sleep with brighter visions dancing before her eyes than had been the case for some time

CHAPTER III.

Sweetheart, we shall be rich ere we depart,
If fairings come thus plentifully in.—SHAKSPEARE.

ELLEN had to wait some time for the desired fine day. The equinoctial storms would have their way as usual, and Ellen thought they were longer than ever this year. But after many stormy days had tried her patience, there was at length a sudden change, both without and within doors. The clouds had done their work for that time, and fled away before a strong northerly wind, leaving the sky bright and fair. And Mrs. Montgomery's deceitful disease took a turn, and for a little space raised the hopes of her friends. All were rejoicing but two persons: Mrs. Montgomery was not deceived, neither was the doctor. The shopping project was kept a profound secret from him and from everybody except Ellen.

Ellen watched now for a favorable day. Every morning as soon as she rose she went to the window to see what was the look of the weather; and about a week after the change above noticed, she was greatly pleased one morning, on opening her window as usual, to find the air and sky promising all that could be desired. It was one of those beautiful days in the end of September, that sometimes herald October before it arrives,—cloudless, brilliant, and breathing balm. "This will do," said Ellen to herself, in great satisfaction. "I think this will do; I hope mamma will think so."

Hastily dressing herself, and a good deal excited already, she ran down stairs; and after the morning salutations, examined her mother's looks with as much anxiety as she had just done those of the weather. All was satisfactory there also; and Ellen eat her breakfast with an excellent appetite; but she said not a word of the intended expedition till her father should be gone. She contented herself with strengthening her hopes by making constant fresh inspections of the

weather and her mother's countenance alternately; and her eyes returning from the window on one of these excursions and meeting her mother's face, saw a smile there which said all she wanted. Breakfast went on more vigorously than ever. But after breakfast it seemed to Ellen that her father never would go away. He took the newspaper, an uncommon thing for him, and pored over it most perseveringly, while Ellen was in a perfect fidget of impatience. Her mother, seeing the state she was in, and taking pity on her, sent her up stairs to do some little matters of business in her own room. These Ellen despatched with all possible zeal and speed; and coming down again found her father gone and her mother alone. She flew to kiss her in the first place, and then make the inquiry, "Don't you think to-day will do, mamma?"

"As fine as possible, daughter; we could not have a better; but I must wait till the doctor has been here."

"Mamma," said Ellen, after a pause, making a great effort of self-denial, "I am afraid you oughtn't to go out to get these things for me. Pray don't, mamma, if you think it will do you harm. I would rather go without them; indeed I would."

"Never mind that, daughter," said Mrs. Montgomery kissing her; "I am bent upon it; it would be quite as much of a disappointment to me as to you not to go. We have a lovely day for it, and we will take our time and walk slowly, and we haven't far to go either. But I must let Dr. Green make his visit first."

To fill up the time till he came Mrs. Montgomery employed Ellen in reading to her as usual. And this morning's reading Ellen long after remembered. Her mother directed her to several passages in different parts of the Bible that speak of heaven and its enjoyments; and though, when she began, her own little heart was full of excitement, in view of the day's plans, and beating with hope and pleasure, the sublime beauty of the words and thoughts, as she went on, awed her into quiet, and her mother's manner at length turned her attention entirely from herself. Mrs. Montgomery was lying on the sofa, and for the most part listened in silence, with her eyes closed; but sometimes saying a word or two that made Ellen feel how deep was the interest her mother had in the

things she read of, and how pure and strong the pleasure she was even now taking in them; and sometimes there was a smile on her face that Ellen scarce liked to see; it gave her an indistinct feeling that her mother would not be long away from that heaven to which she seemed already to belong. Ellen had a sad consciousness too that she had no part with her mother in this matter. She could hardly go on. She came to that beautiful passage in the seventh of Revelation:—

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

With difficulty, and a husky voice, Ellen got through it. Lifting then her eyes to her mother's face, she saw again the same singular sweet smile. Ellen felt that she could not read another word; to her great relief the door opened, and Dr. Green came in. His appearance changed the whole course of her thoughts. All that was grave or painful fled quickly away; Ellen's head was immediately full again of what had filled it before she began to read.

As soon as the doctor had retired and was fairly out of hearing, "Now, mamma, shall we go?" said Ellen. "You needn't stir, mamma; I'll bring all your things to you, and put them on; may I, mamma? then you won't be a bit tired before you set out."

Her mother assented; and with a great deal of tenderness and a great deal of eagerness, Ellen put on her stockings and shoes, arranged her hair, and did all that she could toward changing her dress, and putting on her bonnet and shawl; and greatly delighted she was when the business was accomplished.

"Now, mamma, you look like yourself; I haven't seen you

look so well this great while. I'm so glad you're going out again," said Ellen, putting her arms round her; "I do believe it will do you good. Now, mamma, I'll go and get ready; I'll be very quick about it; you shan't have to wait long for me."

In a few minutes the two set forth from the house. The day was as fine as could be; there was no wind, there was no dust; the sun was not oppressive; and Mrs. Montgomery did feel refreshed and strengthened during the few steps they had to take to their first stopping-place.

It was a jeweller's store. Ellen had never been in one before in her life, and her first feeling on entering was of dazzled wonderment at the glittering splendours around; this was presently forgotten in curiosity to know what her mother could possibly want there. She soon discovered that she had come to sell and not to buy. Mrs. Montgomery drew a ring from her finger, and after a little chaffering parted with it to the owner of the store for eighty dollars, being about three-quarters of its real value. The money was counted out, and she left the store.

"Mamma," said Ellen in a low voice, "wasn't that grandmamma's ring, which I thought you loved so much?"

"Yes, I did love it Ellen, but I love you better."

"O, mamma, I am very sorry!" said Ellen.

"You need not be sorry, daughter. Jewels in themselves are the merest nothings to me; and as for the rest, it doesn't matter; I can remember my mother without any help from a trinket."

There were tears however in Mrs. Montgomery's eyes, that showed the sacrifice had cost her something; and there were tears in Ellen's that told it was not thrown away upon her.

"I am sorry you should know of this," continued Mrs. Montgomery; "you should not if I could have helped it. But set your heart quite at rest, Ellen; I assure you this use of my ring gives me more pleasure on the whole than any other I could have made of it."

A grateful squeeze of her hand and glance into her face was Ellen's answer.

Mrs. Montgomery had applied to her husband for the funds necessary to fit Ellen comfortably for the time they should be

absent; and in answer he had given her a sum barely sufficient for her mere clothing. Mrs. Montgomery knew him better than to ask for a further supply, but she resolved to have recourse to other means to do what she had determined upon. Now that she was about to leave her little daughter, and it might be for ever, she had set her heart upon providing her with certain things which she thought important to her comfort and improvement, and which Ellen would go very long without if *she* did not give them to her, and *now*, Ellen had had very few presents in her life, and those always of the simplest and cheapest kind; her mother resolved that in the midst of the bitterness of this time she would give her one pleasure, if she could; it might be the last.

They stopped next at a bookstore. "O what a delicious smell of new books!" said Ellen, as they entered. "Mamma, if it wasn't for one thing, I should say I never was so happy in my life."

Children's books, lying in tempting confusion near the door, immediately fastened Ellen's eyes and attention. She opened one, and was already deep in the interest of it, when the word "*Bibles*" struck her ear. Mrs. Montgomery was desiring the shopman to show her various kinds and sizes that she might choose from among them. Down went Ellen's book, and she flew to the place, where a dozen different Bibles were presently displayed. Ellen's wits were ready to forsake her. Such beautiful Bibles she had never seen; she pored in ecstacy over their varieties of type and binding, and was very evidently in love with them all.

"Now, Ellen," said Mrs. Montgomery, "look and choose; take your time, and see which you like best."

It was not likely that Ellen's "time" would be a short one. Her mother seeing this, took a chair at a little distance to await patiently her decision; and while Ellen's eyes were rivetted on the Bibles, her own very naturally were fixed upon her. In the excitement and eagerness of the moment, Ellen had thrown off her light bonnet, and with flushed cheek and sparkling eye, and a brow grave with unusual care, as though a nation's fate were deciding, she was weighing the comparative advantages of large, small, and middle sized;--black, blue, purple, and red;—gilt and not gilt;—clasp and no clasp. Everything but the Bibles before her Ellen had forgotten utter-

ly; she was deep in what was to her the most important of business; she did not see the bystanders smile; she did not know there were any. To her mother's eye it was a most fair sight. Mrs. Montgomery gazed with rising emotions of pleasure and pain that struggled for the mastery, but pain at last got the better and rose very high. "How can I give thee up!" was the one thought of her heart. Unable to command herself, she rose and went to a distant part of the counter, where she seemed to be examining books; but tears, some of the bitterest she had ever shed were falling thick upon the dusty floor, and she felt her heart like to break. Her little daughter at one end of the counter had forgotten there ever was such a thing as sorrow in the world; and she at the other was bowed beneath á weight of it that was nigh to crush her. But in her extremity she betook herself to that refuge she had never known to fail; it did not fail her now. She remembered the words Ellen had been reading to her but that very morning, and they came like the breath of heaven upon the fever of her soul. "Not my will, but thine be done." She strove and prayed to say it, and not in vain; and after a little while she was able to return to her seat. She felt that she had been shaken by a tempest, but she was calmer now than before.

Ellen was just as she had left her, and apparently just as far from coming to any conclusion. Mrs. Montgomery was resolved to let her take her way. Presently Ellen came over from the counter with a large royal octavo Bible, heavy enough to be a good lift for her. "Mamma," said she, laying it on her mother's lap and opening it, "what do you think of that? isn't that splendid?"

"A most beautiful page indeed; is this your choice Ellen?"

"Well, mamma, I don't know;—what do you think?"

"I think it is rather inconveniently large and heavy for everyday use. It is quite a weight upon my lap. I shouldn't like to carry it in my hands long. You would want a little table on purpose to hold it."

"Well, that wouldn't do at all," said Ellen, laughing; "I believe you are right, mamma; I wonder I didn't think of it. I might have known that myself."

She took it back; and there followed another careful examination of the whole stock; and then Ellen came to her

mother with a beautiful miniature edition in two volumes, gilt and clasped, and very perfect in all respects, but of exceeding small print.

"I think I'll have this mamma," said she, "isn't it a beauty? I could put it in my pocket, you know, and carry it anywhere with the greatest ease."

"It would have one great objection to me," said Mrs. Montgomery, "inasmuch as I cannot possibly see to read it."

"Cannot you, mamma! But I can read it perfectly."

"Well, my dear, take it; that is, if you will make up your mind to put on spectacles before your time."

"Spectacles, mamma! I hope I shall never wear spectacles."

"What do you propose to do when your sight fails, if you shall live so long?"

"Well, mamma,—if it comes to that,—but you don't advise me then to take this little beauty?"

"Judge for yourself; I think you are old enough."

"I know what you think though, mamma, and I dare say you are right too; I won't take it, though it's a pity. Well, I must look again."

Mrs. Montgomery came to her help, for it was plain Ellen had lost the power of judging amidst so many tempting objects. But she presently simplified the matter by putting aside all that were decidedly too large, or too small, or of too fine print. There remained three, of moderate size and sufficiently large type, but different binding. "Either of these I think will answer your purpose nicely," said Mrs. Montgomery.

"Then, mamma, if you please, I will have the red one. I like that best, because it will put me in mind of yours."

Mrs. Montgomery could find no fault with this reason. She paid for the red Bible, and directed it to be sent home. "Shan't I carry it mamma?" said Ellen.

"No, you would find it in the way; we have several things to do yet."

"Have we, mamma? I thought we only came to get a Bible."

"That is enough for one day, I confess; I am a little afraid your head will be turned; but I must run the risk of it. I dare not lose the opportunity of this fine weather; I may not

have such another. I wish to have the comfort of thinking, when I am away, that I have left you with everything necessary to the keeping up of good habits—everything that will make them pleasant and easy. I wish you to be always neat, and tidy, and industrious; depending upon others as little as possible; and careful to improve yourself by every means, and especially by writing to me. I will leave you no excuse, Ellen, for failing in any of these duties. I trust you will not disappoint me in a single particular."

Ellen's heart was too full to speak; she again looked up tearfully and pressed her mother's hand.

"I do not expect to be disappointed, love," returned Mrs. Montgomery.

They now entered a large fancy store. "What are we to get here, mamma?" said Ellen.

"A box to put your pens and paper in," said her mother, smiling.

"O, to be sure," said Ellen, "I had almost forgotten that." She quite forgot it a minute after. It was the first time she had ever seen the inside of such a store; and the articles displayed on every side completely bewitched her. From one thing to another she went, admiring and wondering; in her wildest dreams she had never imagined such beautiful things. The store was fairy-land.

Mrs. Montgomery meanwhile attended to business. Having chosen a neat little japanned dressing-box, perfectly plain, but well supplied with everything a child could want in that line, she called Ellen from the delightful journey of discovery she was making round the store, and asked her what she thought of it. "I think it's a little beauty," said Ellen; "but I never saw such a place for beautiful things."

"You think it will do then?" said her mother.

"For me, mamma! You don't mean to give it to me? O, mother, how good you are! But I know what is the best way to thank you, and I'll do it. What a perfect little beauty! Mamma, I'm too happy."

"I hope not," said her mother, "for you know I haven't got you the box for your pens and paper yet."

"Well, mamma, I'll try and bear it," said Ellen, laughing. "But do get me the plainest little thing in the world, for you're giving me too much."

Mrs. Montgomery asked to look at writing-desks, and was shown to another part of the store for the purpose. "Mamma," said Ellen, in a low tone, as they went, "you're not going to get me a writing-desk?"

"Why that is the best kind of box for holding writing materials," said her mother, smiling;—"don't you think so?"

"I don't know what to say!" exclaimed Ellen. "I can't thank you, mamma;—I haven't any words to do it. I think I shall go crazy."

She was truly overcome with the weight of happiness. Words failed her, and tears came instead.

From among a great many desks of all descriptions, Mrs. Montgomery with some difficulty succeeded in choosing one to her mind. It was of mahogany, not very large, but thoroughly well made and finished, and very convenient and perfect in its internal arrangements. Ellen was speechless; occasional looks at her mother, and deep sighs, were all she had now to offer. The desk was quite empty. "Ellen," said her mother, "do you remember the furniture of Miss Allen's desk, that you were so pleased with a while ago?"

"Perfectly, mamma; I know all that was in it."

"Well, then, you must prompt me if I forget anything. Your desk shall be furnished with everything really useful. Merely showy matters we can dispense with. Now let us see.—Here is a great empty place that I think wants some paper to fill it. Show me some of different sizes if you please."

The shopman obeyed, and Mrs. Montgomery stocked the desk well with letter paper, large and small. Ellen looked on in great satisfaction. "That will do nicely," she said;—"that large paper will be beautiful whenever I am writing to you, mamma, you know, and the other will do for other times when I haven't so much to say; though I am sure I don't know who there is in the world I should ever send letters to except you."

"If there is nobody now, perhaps there will be at some future time," replied her mother. "I hope I shall not always be your only correspondent. Now what next?"

"Envelopes, mamma?"

"To be sure; I had forgotten them. Envelopes of both sizes to match."

"Because, mamma, you know I might, and I certainly shall, want to write upon the fourth page of my letter, and I couldn't do it unless I had envelopes."

A sufficient stock of envelopes was laid in."

"Mamma," said Ellen, "what do you think of a little note-paper?"

"Who are the notes to be written to, Ellen?" said Mrs. Montgomery, smiling.

"You needn't smile, mamma; you know, as you said, if I don't know now perhaps I shall by-and-by. Miss Allen's desk had note-paper; that made me think of it."

"So shall yours, daughter; while we are about it we will do the thing well. And your note-paper will keep quite safely in this nice little place provided for it, even if you should not want to use a sheet of it in half a dozen years."

"How nice that is!" said Ellen, admiringly.

"I suppose the note-paper must have envelopes too," said Mrs. Montgomery.

"To be sure, mamma; I suppose so," said Ellen, smiling; "Miss Allen's had."

"Well now we have got all the paper we want, I think," said Mrs. Montgomery; "the next thing is ink,—or an inkstand rather."

Different kinds were presented for her choice.

"O, mamma, that one won't do," said Ellen, anxiously; "you know the desk will be knocking about in a trunk, and the ink would run out, and spoil everything. It should be one of those that shut tight. I don't see the right kind here."

The shopman brought one.

"There, mamma, do you see?" said Ellen; "it shuts with a spring, and nothing can possibly come out; do you see, mamma? You can turn it topsy turvy."

"I see you are quite right, daughter; it seems I should get on very ill without you to advise me. Fill the inkstand, if you please."

"Mamma, what shall I do when my ink is gone? that inkstand will hold but a little, you know."

"Your aunt will supply you, of course, my dear, when you are out."

"I'd rather take some of my own by half," said Ellen.

"You could not carry a bottle of ink in your desk without great danger to everything else in it. It would not do to venture."

"We have excellent ink-powder," said the shopman, "in small packages, which can be very conveniently carried about. You see, ma'am, there is a compartment in the desk for such things; and the ink is very easily made at any time."

"O that will do nicely," said Ellen, that is just the thing."

"Now what is to go in this other square place opposite the inkstand?" said Mrs. Montgomery.

"That is the place for the box of lights, mamma."

"What sort of lights?"

"For sealing letters, mamma, you know. They are not like your wax taper at all; they are little wax matches, that burn just long enough to seal one or two letters; Miss Allen showed me how she used them. Her's were in a nice little box just like the inkstand on the outside; and there was a place to light the matches, and a place to set them in while they are burning. There, mamma, that's it," said Ellen, as the shopman brought forth the article which she was describing, "that's it exactly; and that will just fit. Now, mamma, for the wax."

"You want to seal your letter before you have written it," said Mrs. Montgomery,—"we have not got the pens yet."

"That's true, mamma; let us have the pens. And some quills too, mamma?"

"Do you know how to make a pen, Ellen?"

"No, mamma, not yet; but I want to learn very much. Miss Pichegru says, that every lady ought to know how to make her own pens."

"Miss Pichegru is very right; but I think you are rather too young to learn. However, we will try. Now here are steel points enough to last you a great while,—and as many quills as it is needful you should cut up for one year at least; —we haven't a pen handle yet."

"Here, mamma," said Ellen, holding out a plain ivory one,—"don't you like this? I think it is prettier than these that are all cut and fussed, or those other gay ones either."

"I think so too, Ellen; the plainer the prettier. Now what comes next?"

"The knife, mamma, to make the pens,' said Ellen, smiling.

"True, the knife. Let us see some of your best penknives. Now, Ellen, choose. That one won't do, my dear; it should have two blades,—a large as well as a small one. You know you want to mend a pencil sometimes."

"So I do, mamma, to be sure, you're very right; here's a nice one. Now, mamma, the wax."

"There is a box-full; choose your own colours." Seeing it was likely to be a work of time, Mrs. Montgomery walked away to another part of the store. When she returned Ellen had made up an assortment of the oddest colours she could find.

"I won'thave any red, mamma, it is so common," she said.

"I think it is the prettiest of all," said Mrs. Montgomery.

"Do you, mamma? then I will have a stick of red on purpose to seal to you with."

"And who do you intend shall have the benefit of the other colours?" inquired her mother.

"I declare, mamma," said Ellen, laughing, "I never thought of that; I am afraid they will have to go to you. You must not mind, mamma, if you get green and blue and yellow seals once in a while."

"I dare say I shall submit myself to it with a good grace," said Mrs. Montgomery. "But come, my dear, have we got all that we want? This desk has been very long in furnishing."

"You haven't given me a seal yet, mamma."

"Seals! There are a variety before you; see if you can find one that you like. By the way, you cannot seal a letter, can you?"

"Not yet, mamma," said Ellen, smiling again, "that is another of the things I have got to learn."

"Then I think you had better have some wafers in the mean time."

While Ellen was picking out her seal, which took not a little time, Mrs. Montgomery laid in a good supply of wafers of all sorts; and then went on further to furnish the desk with an ivory leaf-cutter, a paper-folder, a pounce-box, a ruler, and a neat little silver pencil; also, some drawing-pencils,

India-rubber, and sheets of drawing paper. She took a sad pleasure in adding everything she could think of that might be for Ellen's future use or advantage; but as with her own hands she placed in the desk one thing after another, the thought crossed her mind how Ellen would make drawings with those very pencils, on those very sheets of paper, which her eyes would never see! She turned away with a sigh, and receiving Ellen's seal from her hand put that also in its place. Ellen had chosen one with her own name.

"Will you send these things *at once*?" said Mrs. Montgomery; "I particularly wish to have them at home as early in the day as possible."

The man promised. Mrs. Montgomery paid the bill, and she and Ellen left the store.

They walked a little way in silence.

"I cannot thank you mamma," said Ellen.

"It is not necessary my dear child," said Mrs. Montgomery, returning the pressure of her hand; "I know all that you would say."

There was as much sorrow as joy at that moment in the heart of the joyfullest of the two.

"Where are we going now, mamma?" said Ellen again after a while.

"I wished and intended to have gone to St. Clair and Fleury's, to get you some merino and other things; but we have been detained so long already that I think I had better go home. I feel somewhat tired."

"I am very sorry, dear mamma," said Ellen,—I am afraid I kept you too long about that desk.

"You did not keep me, daughter, any longer than I chose to be kept. But I think I will go home now, and take the chance of another fine day for the merino."

CHAPTER IV.

How can I live without thee! how forego
Thy sweet converse, and love so dearly joined.—MILTON

WHEN dinner was over and the table cleared away, the mother and daughter were left, as they always loved to be, alone. It was late in the afternoon, and already somewhat dark, for clouds had gathered over the beautiful sky of the morning, and the wind rising now and then made its voice heard. Mrs. Montgomery was lying on the sofa as usual, seemingly at ease; and Ellen was sitting on a little bench before the fire, very much at *her* ease indeed, without any seeming about it. She smiled as she met her mother's eyes.

"You have made me very happy to-day, mamma."

"I am glad of it, my dear child. I hoped I should. I believe the whole affair has given me as much pleasure, Ellen, as it has you."

There was a pause.

"Mamma, I will take the greatest possible care of my new treasures."

"I know you will. If I had doubted it, Ellen, most assuredly I should not have given them to you, sorry as I should have been to leave you without them. So you see you have not established a character for carefulness in vain."

"And, mamma, I hope you have not given them to me in vain either. I will try to use them in the way that I know you wish me to; that will be the best way I can thank you."

"Well, I have left you no excuse, Ellen. You know fully what I wish you to do and to be; and when I am away I shall please myself with thinking that my little daughter *is* following her mother's wishes; I shall believe so, Ellen. You will not let me be disappointed?"

"O no, mamma," said Ellen, who was now in her mother's arms.

"Well, my child," said Mrs. Montgomery, in a lighter tone, "my gifts will serve as reminders for you if you are ever tempted to forget my lessons. If you fail to send me letters, or if those you send are not what they ought to be, I think the desk will cry shame upon you. And if you ever go an hour with a hole in your stocking, or a tear in your dress, or a string off your petticoat, I hope the sight of your work-box will make you blush."

"Work-box, mamma?"

"Yes. O, I forgot; you've not seen that."

"No, mamma; what do you mean?"

"Why, my dear, that was one of the things you most wanted, but I thought it best not to overwhelm you quite this morning; so while you were on an exploring expedition round the store I chose and furnished one for you."

"O mamma, mamma!" said Ellen, getting up and clasping her hands, "what shall I do? I don't know what to say; I can't say anything. Mamma, it's too much."

So it seemed, for Ellen sat down and began to cry. Her mother silently reached out a hand to her, which she squeezed and kissed with all the energy of gratitude, love, and sorrow; till gently drawn by the same hand she was placed again in her mother's arms and upon her bosom. And in that tried resting-place she lay, calmed and quieted, till the shades of afternoon deepened into evening and evening into night, and the light of the fire was all that was left to them.

Though not a word had been spoken for a long time Ellen was not asleep; her eyes were fixed on the red glow of the coals in the grate, and she was busily thinking, but not of them. Many sober thoughts were passing through her little head, and stirring her heart; a few were of her new possessions and bright projects—more of her mother. She was thinking how very, very precious was the heart she could feel beating where her cheek lay—she thought it was greater happiness to lie there than anything else in life could be—she thought she had rather even die so, on her mother's breast, than live long without her in the world—she felt that in earth or in heaven there was nothing so dear. Suddenly she broke the silence.

"Mamma, what does that mean, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me?'"

"It means just what it says. If you love anybody or anything better than Jesus Christ, you cannot be one of his children."

"But then, mamma," said Ellen, raising her head, "how *can* I be one of his children? I do love you a great deal better; how can I help it, mamma?"

"You cannot help it, I know, my dear," said Mrs. Montgomery, with a sigh, "except by His grace who has promised to change the hearts of his people—to take away the heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh."

"But is mine a heart of stone then, mamma, because I cannot help loving you best?"

"Not to me, dear Ellen," replied Mrs. Montgomery, pressing closer the little form that lay in her arms; "I have never found it so. But yet I know that the Lord Jesus is far, far more worthy of your affection than I am, and if your heart were not hardened by sin you would see him so; it is only because you do not know him that you love me better. Pray, pray, my dear child, that he would take away the power of sin, and show you himself; that is all that is wanting."

"I will, mamma," said Ellen, tearfully. "O, mamma, what shall I do without you?"

Alas, Mrs. Montgomery's heart echoed the question; she had no answer.

"Mamma," said Ellen, after a few minutes, "can I have no true love to him at all unless I love him *best?*"

"I dare not say that you can," answered her mother, seriously.

"Mamma," said Ellen, after a little, again raising her head and looking her mother full in the face, as if willing to apply the severest test to this hard doctrine, and speaking with an indescribable expression, "do *you* love him *better than you do me?*"

She knew her mother loved the Saviour, but she thought it scarcely possible that herself could have but the second place in her heart; she ventured a bold question to prove whether her mother's practice would not contradict her theory.

But Mrs. Montgomery answered steadily, "I do, my daughter;" and with a gush of tears Ellen sunk her head again upon her bosom. She had no more to say; her mouth

was stopped forever as to the *right* of the matter, though she still thought it an impossible duty in her own particular case.

"I do indeed, my daughter," repeated Mrs. Montgomery; "that does not make my love to you the less, but the more, Ellen."

"O mamma, mamma," said Ellen, clinging to her, "I wish you would teach me! I have only you, and I am going to lose you. What shall I do, mamma?"

With a voice that strove to be calm Mrs. Montgomery answered, "'I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me.'" And after a minute or two she added, "He who says this has promised too that he will 'gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom.'"

The words fell soothingly on Ellen's ear, and the slight tremor in the voice reminded her also that her mother must not be agitated. She checked herself instantly, and soon lay as before, quiet and still on her mother's bosom, with her eyes fixed on the fire; and Mrs. Montgomery did not know that when she now and then pressed a kiss upon the forehead that lay so near her lips, it every time brought the water to Ellen's eyes and a throb to her heart. But after some half or three-quarters of an hour had passed away, a sudden knock at the door found both mother and daughter asleep; it had to be repeated once or twice before the knocker could gain attention.

"What is that, mamma?" said Ellen, starting up.

"Somebody at the door. Open it quickly, love."

Ellen did so, and found a man standing there, with his arms rather full of sundry packages.

"O, mamma, my things!" cried Ellen, clapping her hands; "here they are!"

The man placed his burden on the table, and withdrew.

"O, mamma, I am so glad they are come! Now if I only had a light—this is my desk, I know, for it's the largest; and I think this is my dressing-box, as well as I can tell by feeling—yes, it is, here's the handle on top; and this is my dear work-box—not so big as the desk, nor so little as the dressing-box. O, mamma, mayn't I ring for a light?"

There was no need, for a servant just then entered, bringing the wished-for candles, and the not-wished-for *tea*. Ellen

was capering about in the most fantastic style, but suddenly stopped short at sight of the tea-things, and looked very grave. "Well, mamma, I'll tell you what I'll do." she said, after a pause of consideration; "I'll make the tea the first thing, before I untie a single knot; won't that be best, mamma? Because I know if I once begin to look I shan't want to stop. Don't you think that is wise, mamma?"

But alas! the fire had got very low; there was no making the tea quickly; and the toast was a work of time. And when all was over at length, it was then too late for Ellen to begin to undo packages. She struggled with impatience a minute or two, and then gave up the point very gracefully, and went to bed.

She had a fine opportunity the next day to make up for the evening's disappointment. It was cloudy and stormy; going out was not to be thought of, and it was very unlikely that anybody would come in. Ellen joyfully allotted the whole morning to the examination and trial of her new possessions; and as soon as breakfast was over and the room clear she set about it. She first went through the desk and everything in it, making a running commentary on the excellence, fitness, and beauty of all it contained; then the dressing-box received a share, but a much smaller share, of attention; and lastly, with fingers trembling with eagerness she untied the packthread that was wound round the work-box, and slowly took off cover after cover; she almost screamed when the last was removed. The box was of satin-wood, beautifully finished, and lined with crimson silk; and Mrs. Montgomery had taken good care it should want nothing that Ellen might need to keep her clothes in perfect order.

"O, mamma, how beautiful! O, mamma, how good you are! Mamma, I promise you I'll never be a slattern. Here is more cotton than I can use up in a great while—every number, I do think; and needles, oh, the needles! what a parcel of them! and, mamma! what a lovely scissors! did you choose it, mamma, or did it belong to the box?"

"I chose it."

"I might have guessed it, mamma, it's just like you. And here's a thimble—fits me exactly; and an emery-bag! how pretty!—and a bodkin! this is a great deal nicer than

your's, mamma—your's is decidedly the worse for wear;—and what's this?—O, to make eyelet holes with, I know. And O, mamma! here is almost every thing, I think—here are tapes, and buttons, and hooks and eyes, and darning cotton, and silk-winders, and pins, and all sorts of things. What's this for, mamma?"

"That's a scissors to cut buttonholes with. Try it on that piece of paper that lies by you, and you will see how it works."

"O, I see!" said Ellen, "how very nice that is. Well, I shall take great pains now to make my buttonholes very handsomely."

One survey of her riches could by no means satisfy Ellen. For some time she pleased herself with going over and over the contents of the box, finding each time something new to like. At length she closed it, and keeping it still in her lap, sat awhile looking thoughtfully into the fire; till turning toward her mother she met her gaze, fixed mournfully, almost tearfully, on herself. The box was instantly shoved aside, and getting up and bursting into tears, Ellen went to her. "O, dear mother," she said, "I wish they were all back in the store, if I could only keep you!"

Mrs. Montgomery answered only by folding her to her heart.

"Is there no help for it, mamma?"

"There is none.—We know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God."

"Then it will be all good for you, mamma, but what will it be for me?" And Ellen sobbed bitterly.

"It will be all well, my precious child, I doubt not. I do not doubt it, Ellen. Do *you* not doubt it either, love; but from the hand that wounds, seek the healing. He wounds that he *may* heal. He does not afflict willingly. Perhaps he sees, Ellen, that you never would seek him while you had me to cling to."

Ellen clung to her at that moment! yet not more than her mother clung to her.

"How happy we were, mamma, only a year ago,—even a month."

"We have no continuing city here," answered her mother, with a sigh. "But there is a home, Ellen, where changes do

not come; and they that are once gathered there are parted no more forever; and all tears are wiped from their eyes. I believe I am going fast to that home; and now my greatest concern is, that my little Ellen—my precious baby—may follow me and come there too."

No more was said, nor could be said, till the sound of the doctor's steps upon the stair obliged each of them to assume an appearance of composure as speedily as possible. But they could not succeed perfectly enough to blind him. He did not seem very well satisfied, and told Ellen he believed he should have to get another nurse,—he was afraid she didn't obey orders.

While the doctor was there Ellen's Bible was brought in; and no sooner was he gone than it underwent as thorough an examination as the boxes had received. Ellen went over every part of it with the same great care and satisfaction; but mixed with a different feeling. The words that caught her eye as she turned over the leaves seemed to echo what her mother had been saying to her. It began to grow dear already. After a little she rose and brought it to the sofa.

"Are you satisfied with it, Ellen?"

"Oh yes, mamma; it is perfectly beautiful, outside and inside. Now, mamma, will you please to write my name in this precious book—my name, and anything else you please, mother. I'll bring you my new pen to write it with, and I've got ink here;—shall I?"

She brought it; and Mrs. Montgomery wrote Ellen's name, and the date of the gift. The pen played a moment in her fingers, and then she wrote below the date:

"'I love them that love me; and they that seek me early shall find me.'"

This was for Ellen; but the next words were not for her; what made her write them?—

"'I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.'"

They were written almost unconsciously, and as if bowed by an unseen force Mrs. Montgomery's head sank upon the open page; and her whole soul went up with her petition:

"Let these words be my memorial, that I have trusted in thee. And oh, when these miserable lips are silent for ever, remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope; and be unto my little one all thou hast

been to me. Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens!"

She raised her face from the book, closed it, and gave it silently to Ellen. Ellen had noticed her action, but had no suspicion of the cause; she supposed that one of her mother's frequent feelings of weakness or sickness had made her lean her head upon the Bible, and she thought no more about it. However, Ellen felt that she wanted no more of her boxes that day. She took her old place by the side of her mother's sofa, with her head upon her mother's hand, and an expression of quiet sorrow in her face that it had not worn for several days.

CHAPTER V.

My child is yet a stranger in the world,
She hath not seen the change of fourteen years.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE next day would not do for the intended shopping nor the next. The third day was fine, though cool and windy.

"Do you think you can venture out to-day, mamma?" said Ellen.

"I am afraid not. I do not feel quite equal to it; and the wind is a great deal too high for me besides."

"Well," said Ellen, in the tone of one who is making up her mind to something, "we shall have a fine day by and by, I suppose, if we wait long enough; we had to wait a great while for our first shopping day. I wish such another would come round."

"But the misfortune is," said her mother, "that we cannot afford to wait. November will soon be here, and your clothes may be suddenly wanted before they are ready, if we do not bestir ourselves. And Miss Rice is coming in a few days—I ought to have the merino ready for her."

"What will you do, mamma?"

"I do not know, indeed, Ellen; I am greatly at a loss."

"Couldn't papa get the stuffs for you mamma?"

"No, he's too busy; and besides, he knows nothing at all about shopping for me; he would be sure to bring me exactly what I do not want. I tried that once."

"Well, what will you do, mamma? Is there nobody else you could ask to get the things for you? Mrs. Foster would do it, mamma!"

"I know she would, and I should ask her without any difficulty, but she is confined to her room with a cold. I see nothing for it but to be patient and let things take their

course, though if a favourable opportunity should offer you would have to go, clothes or no clothes; it would not do to lose the chance of a good escort."

And Mrs. Montgomery's face showed that this possibility, of Ellen's going unprovided, gave her some uneasiness. Ellen observed it.

"Never mind me, dearest mother; don't be in the least worried about my clothes. You don't know how little I think of them or care for them. It's no matter at all whether I have them or not."

Mrs. Montgomery smiled, and passed her hand fondly over her little daughter's head, but presently resumed her anxious look out of the window.

"Mamma!" exclaimed Ellen, suddenly starting up, "a brigh tthought has just come into my head! *I'll* do it for you, mamma!"

"Do what?"

"I'll get the merino and things for you, mamma, You needn't smile,—I will, indeed, if you will let me?"

"My dear Ellen," said her mother, "I don't doubt you would if goodwill only were wanting; but a great deal of skill and experience is necessary for a shopper, and what would you do without either?"

"But see, mamma," pursued Ellen eagerly, "I'll tell you how I'll manage, and I know I can manage very well. You tell me exactly what coloured merino you want, and give me a little piece to show me how fine it should be, and tell me what price you wish to give, and then I'll go to the store and ask them to show me different pieces, you know, and if I see any I think you would like, I'll ask them to give me a little bit of it to show you; and then I'll bring it home, and if you like it, you can give me the money, and tell me how many yards you want, and I can go back to the store and get it. Why can't I, mamma?"

"Perhaps you could; but my dear child I am afraid you wouldn't like the business."

"Yes I should; indeed, mamma, I should like it dearly if I could help you so. Will you let me try, mamma?"

"I don't like, my child, to venture you alone on such an errand, among crowds of people; I should be uneasy about you."

"Dear mamma, what would the crowds of people do to me? I am not a bit afraid. You know, mamma, I have often taken walks alone,—that's nothing new; and what harm should come to me while I am in the store? You needn't be the least uneasy about me;—may I go?"

Mrs. Montgomery smiled, but was silent.

"May I go, mamma?" repeated Ellen. "Let me go at least and try what I can do. What do you say, mamma?"

"I don't know what to say, my daughter, but I am in difficulty on either hand. I will let you go and see what you can do. It would be a great relief to me to get this merino by any means."

"Then shall I go right away, mamma?"

"As well now as ever. *You* are not afraid of the wind?"

"I should think not," said Ellen; and away she scampered up stairs to get ready. With eager haste she dressed herself; then with great care and particularity took her mother's instructions as to the article wanted; and finally set out, sensible that a great trust was reposed in her, and feeling busy and important accordingly. But at the very bottom of Ellen's heart there was a little secret doubtfulness respecting her undertaking. She hardly knew it was there, but then she couldn't tell what it was that made her fingers so inclined to be tremulous while she was dressing, and that made her heart beat quicker than it ought, or than was pleasant, and one of her cheeks so much hotter than the other. However, she set forth upon her errand with a very brisk step, which she kept up till on turning a corner she came in sight of the place she was going to. Without thinking much about it, Ellen had directed her steps to St. Clair and Fleury's. It was one of the largest and best stores in the city, and the one she knew where her mother generally made her purchases; and it did not occur to her that it might not be the best for her purpose on this occasion. But her steps slackened as soon as she came in sight of it, and continued to slacken as she drew nearer, and she went up the broad flight of marble steps in front of the store very slowly indeed, though they were exceeding low and easy. Pleasure was not certainly the uppermost feeling in her mind now; yet she never thought of turning back. She knew that if she could succeed in the object of her mission her mother would be relieved

from some anxiety; that was enough; she was bent on accomplishing it.

Timidly she entered the large hall of entrance. It was full of people, and the buzz of business was heard on all sides. Ellen had for some time past seldom gone a shopping with her mother, and had never been in this store but once or twice before. She had not the remotest idea where, or in what apartment of the building, the merino counter was situated, and she could see no one to speak to. She stood irresolute in the middle of the floor. Everybody seemed to be busily engaged with somebody else; and whenever an opening on one side or another appeared to promise her an opportunity, it was sure to be filled up before she could reach it, and disappointed and abashed she would return to her old station in the middle of the floor. Clerks frequently passed her, crossing the store in all directions, but they were always bustling along in a great hurry of business; they did not seem to notice her at all, and were gone before poor Ellen could get her mouth open to speak to them. She knew well enough now, poor child, what it was that made her cheeks burn as they did, and her heart beat as if it would burst its bounds. She felt confused, and almost confounded, by the incessant hum of voices, and moving crowd of strange people all around her, while her little figure stood alone and unnoticed in the midst of them; and there seemed no prospect that she would be able to gain the ear or the eye of a single person. Once she determined to accost a man she saw advancing toward her from a distance, and actually made up to him for the purpose, but with a hurried bow, and "I beg your pardon, Miss!" he brushed past. Ellen almost burst into tears. She longed to turn and run out of the store, but a faint hope remaining, and an unwillingness to give up her undertaking, kept her fast. At length one of the clerks in the desk observed her, and remarked to Mr. St. Clair who stood by, "There is a little girl, sir, who seems to be looking for something, or waiting for somebody; she has been standing there a good while." Mr. St. Clair, upon this, advanced to poor Ellen's relief.

"What do you wish, Miss?" he said.

But Ellen had been so long preparing sentences, trying to utter them and failing in the attempt, that now, when an

opportunity to speak and be heard was given her, the power of speech seemed to be gone.

"Do you wish anything, Miss?" inquired Mr. St. Clair again.

"Mother sent me," stammered Ellen,—"I wish, if you please, sir,—mamma wished me to look at merinoes, sir, if you please."

"Is your mamma in the store?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, "she is ill, and cannot come out, and she sent me to look at merinoes for her, if you please, sir."

"Here, Saunders," said Mr. St. Clair, "show this young lady the merinoes."

Mr. Saunders made his appearance from among a little group of clerks, with whom he had been indulging in a few jokes by way of relief from the tedium of business. "Come this way," he said to Ellen; and sauntering before her, with a rather dissatisfied air, led the way out of the entrance hall into another and much larger apartment. There were plenty of people here too, and just as busy as those they had quitted. Mr. Saunders having brought Ellen to the merino counter, placed himself behind it; and leaning over it and fixing his eyes carelessly upon her, asked what she wanted to look at. His tone and manner struck Ellen most unpleasantly, and made her again wish herself out of the store. He was a tall lank young man, with a quantity of fair hair combed down on each side of his face, a slovenly exterior, and the most disagreeable pair of eyes, Ellen thought, she had ever beheld. She could not bear to meet them, and cast down her own. Their look was bold, ill-bred, and ill-humoured; and Ellen felt, though she couldn't have told why, that she need not expect either kindness or politeness from him.

"What do you want to see, little one?" inquired this gentleman, as if he had a business on hand he would like to be rid of. Ellen heartily wished he was rid of it, and she too. "Merinoes, if you please," she answered without looking up.

"Well, what kind of merinoes? Here are all sorts and descriptions of merinoes, and I can't pull them all down, you know, for you to look at. What kind do you want?"

"I don't know without looking," said Ellen, "won't you please to show me some?"

He tossed down several pieces upon the counter, and tumbled them about before her.

"There," said he, "is that anything like what you want? There's a pink one,—and there's a blue one,—and there's a green one. Is that the kind?"

"This is the kind," said Ellen; "but this isn't the colour I want."

"What colour do you want?"

"Something dark, if you please."

"Well, there, that green's dark; won't that do? See, that would make up very pretty for you."

"No," said Ellen, "mamma don't like green."

"Why don't she come and choose her stuffs herself, then? What colour *does* she like?"

"Dark blue, or dark brown, or a nice gray, would do," said Ellen, "if it is fine enough."

"'Dark blue,' or 'dark brown,' or a 'nice gray,' eh! Well, she's pretty easy to suit. A dark blue I've showed you already,—what's the matter with that?"

"It isn't dark enough," said Ellen.

"Well," said he, discontentedly, pulling down another piece, "how'll that do? That's dark enough."

It was a fine and beautiful piece, very different from those he had showed her at first. Even Ellen could see that, and fumbling for her little pattern of merino, she compared it with the piece. They agreed perfectly as to fineness.

"What is the price of this?" she asked, with trembling hope that she was going to be rewarded by success for all the trouble of her enterprise.

"Two dollars a yard."

Her hopes and her countenance fell together. "That's too high," she said with a sigh.

"Then take this other blue; come,—it's a great deal prettier than that dark one, and not so dear; and I know your mother will like it better."

Ellen's cheeks were tingling and her heart throbbing, but she couldn't bear to give up.

"Would you be so good as to show me some gray?"

He slowly and ill-humouredly complied, and took down an excellent piece of dark gray, which Ellen fell in love with at

once, but she was again disappointed; it was fourteen shillings.

"Well, if you won't take that, take something else," said the man; "you can't have everything at once; if you will have cheap goods of course you can't have the same quality that you like; but now, here's this other blue, only twelve shillings, and I'll let you have it for ten if you'll take it."

"No, it is too light and too coarse," said Ellen, "mamma wouldn't like it."

"Let me see," said he, seizing her pattern and pretending to compare it; "it's quite as fine as this, if that's all you want."

"Could you," said Ellen timidly, "give me a little bit of this gray to show to mamma?"

"O no!" said he impatiently, tossing over the cloths and throwing Ellen's pattern on the floor; "we can't cut up our goods; if people don't choose to buy of us they may go somewhere else, and if you cannot decide upon anything I must go and attend to those that can. I can't wait here all day."

"What's the matter, Saunders?" said one of his brother clerks, passing him.

"Why I've been here this half hour showing cloths to a child that doesn't know merino from a sheep's back," said he, laughing. And some other customers coming up at the moment he was as good as his word, and left Ellen, to attend to them.

Ellen stood a moment stock still, just where he had left her, struggling with her feelings of mortification; she could not endure to let them be seen. Her face was on fire; her head was dizzy. She could not stir at first, and in spite of her utmost efforts she *could* not command back one or two rebel tears that forced their way; she lifted her hand to her face to remove them as quietly as possible. "What is all this about, my little girl?" said a strange voice at her side. Ellen started, and turned her face, with the tears but half wiped away, toward the speaker. It was an old gentleman, an odd old gentleman too, she thought; one she certainly would have been rather shy of if she had seen him under other circumstances. But though his face was odd, it

looked kindly upon her, and it was a kind tone of voice in which his question had been put; so he seemed to her like a friend. "What is all this?" repeated the old gentleman. Ellen began to tell what it was, but the pride which had forbidden her to weep before strangers gave way at one touch of sympathy, and she poured out tears much faster than words as she related her story, so that it was some little time before the old gentleman could get a clear notion of her case. He waited very patiently till she had finished; but then he set himself in good earnest about righting the wrong. "Hallo! you, sir!" he shouted, in a voice that made everybody look round; "you merino man! come and show your goods: why aren't you at your post, sir?"—as Mr. Saunders came up with an altered countenance—"here's a young lady you've left standing unattended-to I don't know how long; are these your manners?"

"The young lady did not wish anything I believe, sir," returned Mr. Saunders softly.

"You know better, you scoundrel," retorted the old gentleman, who was in a great passion; "I saw the whole matter with my own eyes. You are a disgrace to the store, sir, and deserve to be sent out of it, which you are like enough to be."

"I really thought, sir," said Mr. Saunders smoothly,—for he knew the old gentleman, and knew very well he was a person that must not be offended,—"I really thought—I was not aware, sir, that the young lady had any occasion for my services.

"Well, show your wares, sir, and hold your tongue. Now, my dear, what did you want?"

"I wanted a little bit of this gray merino, sir, to show to mamma;—I couldn't buy it, you know, sir, until I found out whether she would like it."

"Cut a piece, sir, without any words," said the old gentleman. Mr. Saunders obeyed.

"Did you like this best?" pursued the old gentleman.

"I liked this dark blue very much, sir, and I thought mamma would; but it's too high."

"How much is it?" inquired he.

"Fourteen shillings," replied Mr. Saunders.

"He said it was two dollars!" exclaimed Ellen.

"I beg pardon," said the crest-fallen Mr. Saunders, "the

young lady mistook me; I was speaking of another piece when I said two dollars."

"He said this was two dollars, and the gray fourteen shillings," said Ellen.

"Is the gray fourteen shillings," inquired the old gentleman.

"I think not, sir," answered Mr. Saunders—"I believe not, sir,—I think it's only twelve,—I'll inquire, if you please, sir."

"No, no," said the old gentleman, "I know it was only twelve—I know your tricks, sir. Cut a piece off the blue. Now my dear, are there any more pieces of which you would like to take patterns, to show your mother?"

"No sir," said the overjoyed Ellen; "I am sure she will like one of these."

"Now shall we go, then?"

"If you please, sir," said Ellen, "I should like to have my bit of merino that I brought from home; mamma wanted me to bring it back again."

"Where is it?"

"That gentleman threw it on the floor."

"Do you hear, sir?" said the old gentleman; "find it directly."

Mr. Saunders found and delivered it, after stooping in search of it till he was very red in the face; and he was left, wishing heartily that he had some safe means of revenge, and obliged to come to the conclusion that none was within his reach, and that he must stomach his indignity in the best manner he could. But Ellen and her protector went forth most joyously together from the store.

"Do you live far from here?" asked the old gentleman.

"O no, sir," said Ellen, "not very; it's only at Green's Hotel, in Southing street."

"I'll go with you," said he, "and when your mother has decided which merino she will have, we'll come right back and get it. I do not want to trust you again to the mercy of that saucy clerk."

"O thank you, sir!" said Ellen, "that is just what I was afraid of. But I shall be giving you a great deal of trouble, sir," she added, in another tone.

"No you won't," said the old gentleman, "I can't be troubled, so you needn't say anything about that."

They went gaily along—Ellen's heart about five times as light as the one with which she had travelled that very road a little while before. Her old friend was in a very cheerful mood too, for he assured Ellen laughingly that it was of no manner of use for her to be in a hurry, for he could not possibly set off and skip to Green's Hotel, as she seemed inclined to do. They got there at last. Ellen showed the old gentleman into the parlour, and ran up stairs in great haste to her mother. But in a few minutes she came down again, with a very April face, for smiles were playing in every feature while the tears were yet wet upon her cheeks.

"Mamma hopes you'll take the trouble, sir, to come up stairs," she said, seizing his hand; "she wants to thank you herself, sir."

"It is not necessary," said the old gentleman, "it is not necessary at all;" but he followed his little conductor nevertheless to the door of her mother's room, into which she ushered him with great satisfaction.

Mrs. Montgomery was looking very ill—he saw that at a glance. She rose from her sofa, and extending her hand thanked him with glistening eyes for his kindness to her child.

"I don't deserve any thanks, ma'am," said the old gentleman; "I suppose my little friend has told you what made us acquainted?"

"She gave me a very short account of it," said Mrs. Montgomery.

"She was very disagreeably tried." said the old gentleman. "I presume you do not need to be told, ma'am, that her behaviour was such as would have become any years. I assure you, ma'am, if I had had no kindness in my composition tofeel for the *child*, my honour as a gentleman would have made me interfere for the *lady*."

Mrs. Montgomery smiled, but looked through glistening eyes again on Ellen. "I am *very* glad to hear it," she replied. "I was very far from thinking, when I permitted her to go on this errand, that I was exposing her to anything more serious than the annoyance a timid child would feel at having to transact business with strangers."

"I suppose not," said the old gentleman; "but it isn't a sort of thing that should be often done. There are all sorts

of people in this world, and a little one alone in a crowd is in danger of being trampled upon."

Mrs. Montgomery's heart answered this with an involuntary pang. He saw the shade that passed over her face as she said sadly:

"I know it, sir; and it was with strong unwillingness that I allowed Ellen this morning to do as she had proposed; but in truth I was but making a choice between difficulties. I am very sorry I chose as I did. If you are a father, sir, you know better than I can tell you, how grateful I am for your kind interference."

"Say nothing about that ma'am; the less the better. I am an old man, and not good for much now, except to please young people. I think myself best off when I have the best chance to do that. So if you will be so good as to choose that merino, and let Miss Ellen and me go and despatch our business, you will be conferring and not receiving a favour. And any other errand that you please to entrust her with I'll undertake to see her safe through."

His look and manner obliged Mrs. Montgomery to take him at his word. A very short examination of Ellen's patterns ended in favour of the gray merino; and Ellen was commissioned not only to get and pay for this, but also to choose a dark dress of the same stuff, and enough of a certain article called nankeen for a coat; Mrs. Montgomery truly opining that the old gentleman's care would do more than see her scathless,—that it would have some regard to the justness and prudence of her purchases.

In great glee Ellen set forth again with her new old friend. Her hand was fast in his, and her tongue ran very freely, for her heart was completely opened to him. He seemed as pleased to listen as she was to talk; and by little and little Ellen told him all her history; the troubles that had come upon her in consequence of her mother's illness, and her intended journey and prospects.

That was a happy day to Ellen. They returned to St. Clair and Fleury's; bought the gray merino, and the nankeen, and a dark brown merino for a dress. "Do you want only one of these?" asked the old gentleman.

"Mamma said only one," said Ellen; "that will last me all the winter."

"Well," said he, "I think two will do better. Let us have another off the same piece, Mr. Shopman."

"But I am afraid mamma won't like it, sir," said Ellen, gently.

"Pho, pho," said he, "your mother has nothing to do with this; this is my affair." He paid for it accordingly. "Now, Miss Ellen," said he, when they left the store, "have you got anything in the shape of a good warm winter bonnet? For it's as cold as the mischief up there in Thirlwall; your pasteboard things wont do; if you don't take good care of your ears you will lose them some fine frosty day. You must quilt and pad, and all sorts of things, to keep alive and comfortable. So you haven't a hood, eh? Do you think you and I could make out to choose one that your mother would think wasn't quite a fright? Come this way, and let us see. If she don't like it she can give it away, you know."

He led the delighted Ellen into a milliner's shop, and after turning over a great many different articles chose her a nice warm hood, or quilted bonnet. It was of dark blue silk, well made and pretty. He saw with great satisfaction that it fitted Ellen well, and would protect her ears nicely; and having paid for it and ordered it home, he and Ellen sallied forth into the street again. But he wouldn't let her thank him. "It is just the very thing I wanted, sir," said Ellen; "mamma was speaking about it the other day, and she did not see how I was ever to get one, because she did not feel at all able to go out, and I could not get one myself; I know she'll like it very much."

"Would you rather have something for yourself or your mother, Ellen, if you could choose, and have but one?"

"Oh, for mamma, sir," said Ellen—"a great deal!"

"Come in here," said he; "let us see if we can find anything she would like."

It was a grocery store. After looking about a little, the old gentleman ordered sundry pounds of figs and white grapes to be packed up in papers; and being now very near home he took one parcel and Ellen the other till they come to the door of Green's Hotel, where he committed both to her care.

"Won't you come in, sir?" said Ellen.

"No," said he, "I can't this time—I must go home to dinner."

"And shan't I see you any more, sir?" said Ellen, a shade coming over her face, which a minute before had been quite joyous.

"Well, I don't know," said he kindly—"I hope you will. You shall hear from me again at any rate, I promise you. We've spent one pleasant morning together, haven't we? Good-bye, good-bye."

Ellen's hands were full, but the old gentleman took them in both his, packages and all, and shook them after a fashion, and again bidding her good-bye, walked away down the street.

The next morning Ellen and her mother were sitting quietly together, and Ellen had not finished her accustomed reading, when there came a knock at the door. "My old gentleman!" cried Ellen, as she sprung to open it. No,—there was no old gentleman, but a black man with a brace of beautiful woodcock in his hand. He bowed very civilly, and said he had been ordered to leave the birds with Miss Montgomery. Ellen, in surprise, took them from him, and likewise a note which he delivered into her hand. Ellen asked from whom the birds came, but with another polite bow the man said the note would inform her, and went away. In great curiosity she carried them and the note to her mother, to whom the latter was directed. It read thus:—

"Will Mrs. Montgomery permit an old man to please himself in his own way, by showing his regard for her little daughter? And not feel that he is taking a liberty. The birds are *for Miss Ellen.*"

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Ellen, jumping with delight, "did you ever see such a dear old gentleman? Now I know what he meant yesterday, when he asked me if I would rather have something for myself or for you. How kind he is! to do just the very thing for me that he knows would give me the most pleasure. Now, mamma, these birds are mine, you know, and I give them to you. You must pay me a kiss for them mamma; they are worth that. Aren't they beauties?"

"They are very fine indeed," said Mrs. Montgomery; "this

is just the season for woodcock, and these are in beautiful condition."

"Do you like woodcocks, mamma?"

"Yes, very much."

"O, how glad I am!" said Ellen. "I'll ask Sam to have them done very nicely for you, and then you will enjoy them so much."

The waiter was called, and instructed accordingly, and to him the birds were committed, to be delivered to the care of the cook.

"Now mamma," said Ellen, "I think these birds have made me happy for all day."

"Then I hope, daughter, they will make you busy for all day. You have ruffles to hem, and the skirts of your dresses to make, we need not wait for Miss Rice to do that; and when she comes you will have to help her, for I can do little. You can't be too industrious."

"Well, mamma, I am as willing as can be."

This was the beginning of a pleasant two weeks to Ellen; weeks to which she often looked back afterwards, so quietly and swiftly the days fled away in busy occupation and sweet intercourse with her mother. The passions which were apt enough to rise in Ellen's mind upon occasion, were for the present kept effectually in check. She could not forget that her days with her mother would very soon be at an end, for a long time at least; and this consciousness, always present to her mind, forbade even the wish to do anything that might grieve or disturb her. Love and tenderness had absolute rule for the time, and even had power to overcome the sorrowful thoughts that would often rise, so that in spite of them peace reigned. And perhaps both mother and daughter enjoyed this interval the more keenly because they knew that sorrow was at hand.

All this while there was scarcely a day that the old gentleman's servant did not knock at their door, bearing a present of game. The second time he came with some fine larks; next was a superb grouse then; woodcock again. Curiosity strove with astonishment and gratitude in Ellen's mind. "Mamma," she said, after she had admired the grouse for five minutes, "I cannot rest without finding out who this old gentleman is."

"I am sorry for that," replied Mrs. Montgomery gravely, "for I see no possible way of your doing it."

"Why, mamma, couldn't I ask the man that brings the birds what his name is? He must know it."

"Certainly not; it would be very dishonourable."

"Would it, mamma?—why?"

"This old gentleman has not chosen to tell you his name; he wrote his note without signing it, and his man has obviously been instructed not to disclose it; don't you remember, he did not tell it when you asked him, the first time he came. Now this shows that the old gentleman wishes to keep it secret, and to try to find it out in any way would be a very unworthy return for his kindness."

"Yes, it wouldn't be doing as I would be done by, to be sure; but would it be *dishonourable*, mamma?"

"Very. It is very dishonorable to try to find out that about other people which does not concern you, and which they wish to keep from you. Remember that my dear daughter."

"I will, mamma. I'll never do it, I promise you."

"Even in talking with people, if you discern in them any unwillingness to speak upon a subject, avoid it immediately, provided of course that some higher interest do not oblige you to go on. That is true politeness, and true kindness, which are nearly the same; and *not* to do so, I assure you, Ellen, proves one wanting in true honour."

"Well mamma, I don't care what his name is,—at least I wont try to find out;—but it does worry me that I cannot thank him. I wish he knew how much I feel obliged to him."

"Very well; write and tell him so."

"Mamma!" said Ellen, opening her eyes very wide,—"can I?—would you?"

"Certainly,—if you like. It would be very proper."

"Then I will! I declare that is a good notion. I'll do it the first thing, and then I can give it to that man if he comes to-morrow, as I suppose he will. Mamma," said she, on opening her desk, "how funny! don't you remember you wondered who I was going to write notes to? here is one now, mamma; it is very lucky I have got notepaper."

More than one sheet of it was ruined before Ellen had

satisfied herself with what she wrote. It was a full hour from the time she began when she brought the following note for her mother's inspection :—

"Ellen Montgomery does not know how to thank the old gentleman who is so kind to her. Mamma enjoys the birds very much, and I think I do more; for I have the double pleasure of giving them to mamma, and of eating them afterwards; but your kindness is the best of all. I can't tell you how much I am obliged to you, sir, but I will always love you for all you have done for me.

"Ellen Montgomery."

This note Mrs. Montgomery approved; and Ellen having with great care and great satisfaction enclosed it in an envelope, succeeded in sealing it according to rule and very well. Mrs. Montgomery laughed when she saw the direction, but let it go. Without consulting her, Ellen had written on the outside, "To the old gentleman." She sent it the next morning by the hands of the same servant, who this time was the bearer of a plump partridge "To Miss Montgomery;" and her mind was a great deal easier on this subject from that time.

CHAPTER VI.

Mac. What is the night?
Lady M. Almost at odds with morning, which is which.
MACBETH.

OCTOBER was now far advanced. One evening, the evening of the last Sunday in the month, Mrs. Montgomery was lying in the parlour alone. Ellen had gone to bed some time before; and now in the stillness of the Sabbath evening the ticking of the clock was almost the only sound to be heard. The hands were rapidly approaching ten. Captain Montgomery was abroad; and he had been so,—according to custom,—or in bed, the whole day. The mother and daughter had had the Sabbath to themselves; and most quietly and sweetly it had passed. They had read together, prayed together, talked together a great deal; and the evening had been spent in singing hymns; but Mrs. Montgomery's strength failed here, and Ellen sang alone. *She* was not soon weary. Hymn succeeded hymn, with fresh and varied pleasure; and her mother could not tire of listening. The sweet words, and the sweet airs,—which were all old friends, and brought of themselves many a lesson of wisdom and consolation, by the mere force of association,—needed not the recommendation of the clear childish voice in which they were sung which was of all things the sweetest to Mrs. Montgomery's ear. She listened,—till she almost felt as if earth were left behind, and she and her child already standing within the walls of that city where sorrow and sighing shall be no more, and the tears shall be wiped from all eyes forever. Ellen's next hymn, however, brought her back to earth again, but though her tears flowed freely while she heard it, all her causes of sorrow could not render them bitter.

God in Israel sows the seeds
Of affliction, pain, and toil;
These spring up and choke the weeds
Which would else o'erspread the soil.
Trials make the promise sweet,—
Trials give new life to prayer,—
Trials bring me to his feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there.

"It is so indeed, dear Ellen," said Mrs. Montgomery when she had finished, and folding the little singer to her breast,—"I have always found it so. God is faithful. I have seen abundant cause to thank him for all the evils he has made me suffer heretofore, and I do not doubt it will be the same with this last and worst one. Let us glorify him in the fires, my daughter; and if earthly joys be stripped from us, and if we be torn from each other, let us cling the closer to him,—he can and he will in that case make up to us more than all we have lost."

Ellen felt her utter inability to join in her mother's expressions of confidence and hope; to her there was no brightness on the cloud that hung over them,—it was all dark. She could only press her lips in tearful silence to the one and the other of her mother's cheeks alternately. How sweet the sense of the coming parting made every such embrace! This one, for particular reasons, was often and long remembered. A few minutes they remained thus in each other's arms, cheek pressed against cheek, without speaking; but then Mrs. Montgomery remembered that Ellen's bed-time was already past, and dismissed her.

For a while after Mrs. Montgomery remained just where Ellen had left her, her busy thoughts roaming over many things in the far past, and the sad present, and the uncertain future. She was unconscious of the passage of time, and did not notice how the silence deepened as the night drew on, till scarce a footfall was heard in the street, and the ticking of the clock sounded with that sad distinctness which seems to say,—"Time is going on—time is going on,—and you are going with it,—do what you will you can't help that." It was just upon the stroke of ten, and Mrs. Montgomery was still wrapped in her deep musings, when a sharp brisk footstep in the distance aroused her, rapidly approaching;—and she knew very well whose it was, and that it would pause at the door, before she heard the quick run

up the steps, succeeded by her husband's tread upon the staircase. And yet she saw him open the door with a kind of startled feeling which his appearance now invariably caused her; the thought always darted through her head, "perhaps he brings news of Ellen's going." Something, it would have been impossible to say what, in his appearance or manner, confirmed this fear on the present occasion. Her heart felt sick, and she waited in silence to hear what he would say. *He* seemed very well pleased; sat down before the fire rubbing his hands, partly with cold and partly with satisfaction; and his first words were, "Well! we have got a fine opportunity for her at last."

How little he was capable of understanding the pang this announcement gave his poor wife! But she only closed her eyes and kept perfectly quiet, and he never suspected it.

He unbuttoned his coat, and taking the poker in his hand began to mend the fire, talking the while.

"I am very glad of it indeed," said he,—"it's quite a load off my mind. Now we'll be gone directly, and high time it is—I'll take passage in the England the first thing to-morrow. And this is the best possible chance for Ellen—everything we could have desired. I began to feel very uneasy about it,—it was getting so late,—but I am quite relieved now."

"Who is it?" said Mrs. Montgomery, forcing herself to speak.

"Why, it's Mrs. Dunscombe," said the captain, flourishing his poker by way of illustration,—"you know her, don't you?—Captain Dunscombe's wife—she's going right through Thirlwall, and will take charge of Ellen as far as that, and there my sister will meet her with a wagon and take her straight home. Couldn't be anything better. I write to let Fortune know when to expect her. Mrs. Dunscombe is a lady of the first family and fashion—in the highest degree respectable; she is going on to Fort Jameson, with her daughter and a servant, and her husband is to follow her in a few days. I happened to hear of it to-day, and I immediately seized the opportunity to ask if she would not take Ellen with her as far as Thirlwall, and Dunscombe was only too glad to oblige me. I'm a very good friend of his, and he knows it."

"How soon does she go?"

"Why—that's the only part of the business I am afraid you won't like,—but there is no help for it;—and after all it is a great deal better so than if you had time to wear yourselves out with mourning—better and easier too, in the end."

"How soon?" repeated Mrs. Montgomery, with an agonized accent.

"Why—I'm a little afraid of startling you—Dunscombe's wife must go, he told me, to-morrow morning; and we arranged that she should call in the carriage at six o'clock to take up Ellen."

Mrs. Montgomery put her hands to her face and sank back against the sofa.

"I was afraid you would take it so," said her husband,—"but I don't think it is worth while. It is a great deal better as it is,—a great deal better than if she had a long warning. You would fairly wear yourself out if you had time enough; and you haven't any strength to spare."

It was some while before Mrs. Montgomery could recover composure and firmness enough to go on with what she had to do, though knowing the necessity, he strove hard for it. For several minutes she remained quite silent and quiet, endeavoring to collect her scattered forces; then sitting upright and drawing her shawl around her she exclaimed, "I must waken Ellen immediately!"

"Waken Ellen!" exclaimed her husband in his turn,—"what on earth for? That's the very last thing to be done."

"Why you would not put off telling her until to-morrow morning?" said Mrs. Montgomery.

"Certainly I would—that's the only proper way to do. Why in the world should you wake her up, just to spend the whole night in useless grieving?—unfitting her utterly for her journey, and doing yourself more harm than you can undo in a week. No, no,—just let her sleep quietly, and you go to bed and do the same. Wake her, up, indeed! I thought you were wiser."

"But she will be so dreadfully shocked in the morning!"

"Not one bit more than she would be to-night, and she won't have so much time to feel it. In the hurry and bustle

of getting off she will not have time to think about her feelings; and once on the way she will do well enough;—children always do."

Mrs Montgomery looked undecided and unsatisfied.

"I'll take the responsibility of this matter on myself,—you must not waken her, absolutely. It would not do at all," said the Captain, poking the fire very energetically,—"it would not do at all,—I cannot allow it."

Mrs. Montgomery silently rose and lit a lamp.

"You are not going into Ellen's room?" said the husband.

"I must—I must put her things together."

"But you'll not disturb Ellen?" said he, in a tone that required a promise.

"Not if I can help it."

Twice Mrs. Montgomery stopped before she reached the door of Ellen's room, for her heart failed her. But she *must* go on, and the necessary preparations for the morrow *must* be made;—she knew it; and repeating this to herself she gently turned the handle of the door and pushed it open, and guarding the light with her hand from Ellen's eyes, she set it where it would not shine upon her. Having done this, she set herself, without once glancing at her little daughter, to put all things in order for her early departure on the following morning. But it was a bitter piece of work for her. She first laid out all that Ellen would need to wear,—the dark merino, the new nankeen coat, the white bonnet, the clean frill that her own hands had done up, the little gloves and shoes, and all the etceteras, with the thoughtfulness and the carefulness of love; but it went through and through her heart that it was the very last time a mother's fingers would ever be busy in arranging or preparing Ellen's attire;—the very last time she would ever see or touch even the little inanimate things that belonged to her; and painful as the task was she was loth to have it come to an end. It was with a kind of lingering unwillingness to quit her hold of them that one thing after another was stowed carefully and neatly away in the trunk. She felt it was love's last act; words might indeed a few times yet come over the ocean on a sheet of paper;—but sight, and hearing, and touch, must all have done henceforth for ever. Keenly as Mrs. Montgomery felt this, she went on busily with her

work all the while; and when the last thing was safely packed, shut the trunk and locked it without allowing herself to stop and think, and even drew the straps. And then, having finished all her task, she went to the bedside; she had not looked that way before.

Ellen was lying in the deep sweet sleep of childhood; the easy position, the gentle breathing, and the flush of health upon the cheek showed that all causes of sorrow were for the present far removed. Yet not so far either;—for once when Mrs. Montgomery stooped to kiss her, light as the touch of that kiss had been upon her lips, it seemed to awaken a train of sorrowful recollections in the little sleeper's mind. A shade passed over her face, and with gentle but sad accent the word, "Mamma!" burst from the parted lips. Only a moment,—and the shade passed away, and the expression of peace settled again upon her brow; but Mrs. Montgomery dared not try the experiment a second time. Long she stood looking upon her, as if she knew she was looking her last; then she knelt by the bedside and hid her face in the coverings,—but no tears came; the struggle in her mind and her anxious fear of the morning's trial made weeping impossible. Her husband at length came to seek her, and it was well he did; she would have remained there on her knees all night. He feared something of the kind, and came to prevent it. Mrs. Montgomery suffered herself to be led away without making any opposition; and went to bed as usual, but sleep was far from her. The fear of Ellen's distress when she should be awakened and suddenly told the truth, kept her in an agony. In restless wakefulness she tossed and turned uneasily upon her bed, watching for the dawn, and dreading unspeakably to see it. The Captain, in happy unconsciousness of his wife's distress and utter inability to sympathize with it, was soon in a sound sleep, and his heavy breathing was an aggravation of her trouble; it kept repeating, what indeed she knew already, that the only one in the world who ought to have shared and soothed her grief was not capable of doing either. Wearied with watching and tossing to and fro, she at length lost herself a moment in uneasy slumber, from which she suddenly started in terror, and seizing her husband's arm to arouse him, exclaimed, "It

is time to wake Ellen!" but she had to repeat her efforts two or three times before she succeeded in making herself heard.

"What is the matter?" said he heavily, and not overwell pleased at the interruption.

"It is time to wake Ellen."

"No it isn't," said he, relapsing,—"it isn't time yet this great while."

"O, yes it is," said Mrs. Montgomery,—"I am sure it is; I see the beginning of dawn in the east."

"Nonsense! it's no such thing; it's the glimmer of the lamp-light; what is the use of your exciting yourself so for nothing. It won't be dawn these two hours. Wait till I find my repeater, and I'll convince you."

He found and struck it.

"There! I told you so—only one quarter after four; it would be absurd to wake her yet. Do go to sleep and leave it to me; I'll take care it is done in proper time."

Mrs. Montgomery sighed heavily, and again arranged herself to watch the eastern horizon, or rather with her face in that direction; for she could see nothing. But more quietly now she lay gazing into the darkness which it was in vain to try to penetrate; and thoughts succeeding thoughts in a more regular train, at last fairly cheated her into sleep, much as she wished to keep it off. She slept soundly for near an hour; and when she awoke the dawn had really begun to break in the eastern sky. She again aroused Captain Montgomery, who this time allowed it might be as well to get up; but it was with unutterable impatience that she saw him lighting a lamp, and moving about as leisurely as if he had nothing more to do than to get ready for breakfast at eight o'clock.

"O, do speak to Ellen!" she said, unable to control herself. "Never mind brushing your hair till afterwards. She will have no time for anything. O do not wait any longer! what are you thinking of?"

"What are *you* thinking of?" said the Captain;—"there's plenty of time. Do quiet yourself—you're getting as nervous as possible. I'm going immediately."

Mrs. Montgomery fairly groaned with impatience and an agonizing dread of what was to follow the disclosure to Ellen. But her husband coolly went on with his preparations, which indeed were not long in finishing; and then taking the lamp

he at last went. He had in truth delayed on purpose, wishing the final leave-taking to be as brief as possible; and the gray streaks of light in the east were plainly showing themselves when he opened the door of his little daughter's room. He found her lying very much as her mother had left her,—in the same quiet sleep, and with the same expression of calmness and peace spread over her whole face and person. It touched even him,—and he was not readily touched by anything;—it made him loth to say the word that would drive all that sweet expression so quickly and completely away. It must be said, however; the increasing light warned him he must not tarry; but it was with a hesitating and almost faltering voice that he said, "Ellen!"

She stirred in her sleep, and the shadow came over her face again.

"Ellen! Ellen!"

She started up,—broad awake now;—and both the shadow and the peaceful expression were gone from her face. It was a look of blank astonishment at first with which she regarded her father, but very soon indeed that changed into one of blank despair. He saw that she understood perfectly what he was there for, and that there was no need at all for him to trouble himself with making painful explanations.

"Come, Ellen," he said,—"that's a good child, make haste and dress. There's no time to lose now, for the carriage will soon be at the door; and your mother wants to see you, you know."

Ellen hastily obeyed him, and began to put on her stockings and shoes.

"That's right—now you'll be ready directly. You are going with Mrs. Dunscombe—I have engaged her to take charge of you all the way quite to Thirlwall; she's the wife of Captain Dunscombe, whom you saw here the other day, you know; and her daughter is going with her, so you will have charming company. I dare say you will enjoy the journey very much; and your aunt will meet you at Thirlwall. Now, make haste—I expect the carriage every minute. I meant to have called you before, but I overslept myself. Don't be long."

And nodding encouragement, her father left her.

"How did she bear it?" asked Mrs. Montgomery, when he returned.

"Like a little hero. She didn't say a word, or shed a tear. I expected nothing but that she would make a great fuss; but she has all the old spirit that you used to have,—and have yet, for anything I know. She behaved admirably."

Mrs. Montgomery sighed deeply. She understood far better than her husband what Ellen's feelings were, and could interpret much more truly than he the signs of them; the conclusions she drew from Ellen's silent and tearless reception of the news differed widely from his. She now waited anxiously and almost fearfully for her appearance, which did not come as soon as she expected it.

It was a great relief to Ellen when her father ended his talking, and left her to herself; for she felt she could not dress herself so quick with him standing there and looking at her, and his desire that she should be speedy in what she had to do could not be greater than her own. Her fingers did their work as fast as they could, with every joint trembling. But though a weight like a mountain was upon the poor child's heart, she could not cry; and she could not pray,—though true to her constant habit she fell on her knees by her bedside as she always did: it was in vain; all was in a whirl in her heart and head, and after a minute she rose again, clasping her little hands together with an expression of sorrow that it was well her mother could not see. She was dressed very soon, but she shrank from going to her mother's room while her father was there. To save time she put on her coat, and everything but her bonnet and gloves; and then stood leaning against the bedpost, for she could not sit down, watching with most intense anxiety to hear her father's step come out of the room and go down stairs. Every minute seemed too long to be borne; poor Ellen began to feel as if she could not contain herself. Yet five had not passed away when she heard the roll of carriage wheels which came to the door and then stopped, and immediately her father opening the door to come out. Without waiting any longer Ellen opened her own, and brushed past him into the room he had quitted. Mrs. Montgomery was still lying on the bed, for her husband had insisted on her not rising. She said not a word, but

opened her arms to receive her little daughter; and with a cry of indescribable expression Ellen sprang upon the bed, and was folded in them. But then neither of them spoke or wept. What could words say? Heart met heart in that agony, for each knew all that was in the other. No,—not quite all. Ellen did not know that the whole of bitterness death had for her mother she was tasting then. But it was true. Death had no more power to give her pain after this parting should be over. His after-work,—the parting between soul and body,—would be welcome rather; yes, very welcome. Mrs. Montgomery knew it all well. She knew this was the last embrace between them. She knew it was the very last time that dear little form would ever lie on her bosom, or be pressed in her arms; and it almost seemed to her that soul and body must part company too when they should be rent asunder. Ellen's grief was not like this;—*she* did not think it was the last time;—but she was a child of very high spirit and violent passions, untamed at all by sorrow's discipline; and in proportion violent was the tempest excited by this first real trial. Perhaps, too, her sorrow was sharpened by a sense of wrong and a feeling of indignation at her father's cruelty in not waking her earlier.

Not many minutes had passed in this sad embrace, and no word had yet been spoken, no sound uttered, except Ellen's first inarticulate cry of mixed affection and despair, when Captain Montgomery's step was again heard slowly ascending the stairs. "He is coming to take me away!" thought Ellen; and in terror lest she should go without a word from her mother, she burst forth with, "Mamma! speak!"

A moment before, and Mrs. Montgomery could not have spoken. But she could now; and as clearly and calmly the words were uttered as if nothing had been the matter, only her voice fell a little towards the last.

"God bless my darling child! and make her his own,—and bring her to that home where parting cannot be."

Ellen's eyes had been dry until now; but when she heard the sweet sound of her mother's voice, it opened all the fountains of tenderness within her. She burst into uncontrollable weeping; it seemed as if she would pour out her very heart in tears; and she clung to her mother with a force

that made it a difficult task for her father to remove her. He could not do it at first; and Ellen seemed not to hear anything that was said to her. He was very unwilling to use harshness; and after a little, though she had paid no attention to his entreaties or commands, yet sensible of the necessity of the case, she gradually relaxed her hold and suffered him to draw her away from her mother's arms. He carried her down stairs, and put her on the front seat of the carriage, beside Mrs. Dunscombe's maid,—but Ellen could never recollect how she got there, and she did not feel the touch of her father's hand, nor hear him when he bid her good-bye; and she did not know that he put a large paper of candies and sugar-plums in her lap. She knew nothing but that she had lost her mother.

"It will not be so long," said the Captain, in a kind of apologizing way; "she will soon get over it, and you will not have any trouble with her."

"I hope so," returned the lady, rather shortly; and then, as the Captain was making his parting bow, she added, in no very pleased tone of voice, "Pray, Captain Montgomery, is this young lady to travel without a bonnet?"

"Bless me! no," said the Captain. "How is this? hasn't she a bonnet? I beg a thousand pardons, ma'am,—I'll bring it on the instant."

After a little delay, the bonnet was found, but the Captain overlooked the gloves in his hurry.

"I am very sorry you have been delayed, ma'am," said he.

"I hope we may be able to reach the boat yet," replied the lady. "Drive on as fast as you can!"

A very polite bow from Captain Montgomery—a very slight one from the lady—and off they drove.

"Proud enough," thought the Captain, as he went up the stairs again. "I reckon she don't thank me for her traveling companion. But Ellen's off—that's one good thing:—and now I'll go and engage berths in the England."

CHAPTER VII.

"So fair and foul a day I have not seen."
MACBETH.

THE long drive to the boat was only a sorrowful blank to Ellen's recollection. She did not see the frowns that passed between her companions on her account. She did not know that her white bonnet was such a matter of merriment to Margaret Dunscombe and the maid, that they could hardly contain themselves. She did not find out that Miss Margaret's fingers were busy with her paper of sweets, which only a good string and a sound knot kept her from rifling. Yet she felt very well that nobody there cared in the least for her sorrow. It mattered nothing; she wept on in her loneliness, and knew nothing that happened, till the carriage stopped on the wharf; even then she did not raise her head. Mrs. Dunscombe got out, and saw her daughter and servant do the same; then after giving some orders about the baggage, she returned to Ellen.

"Will you get out, Miss Montgomery? or would you prefer to remain in the carriage? We must go on board directly."

There was something, not in the words, but in the tone, that struck Ellen's heart with an entirely new feeling. Her tears stopped instantly, and wiping away quick the traces of them as well as she could, she got out of the carriage without a word, aided by Mrs. Dunscombe's hand. The party were presently joined by a fine-looking man, whom Ellen recognized as Captain Dunscombe.

"Dunscombe, do put these girls on board, will you? and then come back to me; I want to speak to you. Timmins, you may go along and look after them."

Captain Dunscombe obeyed. When they reached the deck, Margaret Dunscombe and the maid Timmins went straight to the cabin. Not feeling at all drawn towards their

company, as indeed they had given her no reason, Ellen planted herself by the guards of the boat, not far from the gangway, to watch the busy scene that at another time would have had a great deal of interest and amusement for her. And interest it had now; but it was with a very, very grave little face that she looked on the bustling crowd. The weight on her heart was just as great as ever, but she felt this was not the time or the place to let it be seen; so for the present she occupied herself with what was passing before her, though it did not for one moment make her forget her sorrow.

At last the boat rang her last bell. Captain Duns combe put his wife on board, and had barely time to jump off the boat again when the plank was withdrawn. The men on shore cast off the great loops of ropes that held the boat to enormous wooden posts on the wharf, and they were off!

At first it seemed to Ellen as if the wharf and the people upon it were sailing away from them backwards; but she presently forgot to think of them at all. She was gone!—she felt the bitterness of the whole truth;—the blue water already lay between her and the shore, where she so much longed to be. In that confused mass of buildings at which she was gazing, but which would be so soon beyond even gazing distance, was the only spot she cared for in the world; her heart was there. She could not see the place, to be sure, nor tell exactly whereabouts it lay in all that wide-spread city; but it was there, somewhere,—and every minute was making it farther and farther off. It's a bitter thing, that sailing away from all one loves; and poor Ellen felt it so. She stood leaning both her arms upon the rail, the tears running down her cheeks, and blinding her so that she could not see the place toward which her straining eyes were bent. Somebody touched her sleeve,—it was Timmins.

"Mrs. Dunscombe sent me to tell you she wants you to come into the cabin, miss."

Hastily wiping her eyes, Ellen obeyed the summons, and followed Timmins into the cabin. It was full of groups of ladies, children, and nurses,—bustling and noisy enough. Ellen wished she might have stayed outside; she wanted to be by herself; but as the next best thing, she mounted upon

the bench which ran all round the saloon, and kneeling on the cushion by one of the windows, placed herself with the edge of her bonnet just touching the glass, so that nobody could see a bit of her face, while she could look out near by as well as from the deck. Presently her ear caught, as she thought, the voice of Mrs. Dunscombe, saying in rather an undertone, but laughing too, "What a figure she does cut in that outlandish bonnet!"

Ellen had no particular reason to think *she* was meant, and yet she did think so. She remained quite still, but with raised color and quickened breathing waited to hear what would come next. Nothing came at first, and she was beginning to think she had perhaps been mistaken, when she plainly heard Margaret Dunscombe say, in a loud whisper, "Mamma, I wish you could contrive some way to keep her in the cabin,—can't you? she looks so odd in that queer sunbonnet kind of a thing, that anybody would think she had come out of the woods,—and no gloves, too; I shouldn't like to have the Miss M'Arthurs think she belonged to us;—can't you, mamma?"

If a thunderbolt had fallen at Ellen's feet, the shock would hardly have been greater. The lightning of passion shot through every vein. And it was not passion only; there was hurt feeling and wounded pride, and the sorrow of which her heart was full enough before, now wakened afresh. The child was beside herself. One wild wish for a hiding-place was the most pressing thought,—to be where tears could burst and her heart could break unseen. She slid off her bench and rushed through the crowd to the red curtain that cut off the far end of the saloon; and from there down to the the cabin below,—people were everywhere. At last she spied a nook where she could be completely hidden. It was in the far-back end of the boat, just under the stairs by which she had come down. Nobody was sitting on the three or four large mahogany steps that ran round that end of the cabin and sloped up to the little cabin window; and creeping beneath the stairs, and seating herself on the lowest of these steps, the poor child found that she was quite screened and out of sight of every human creature. It was time indeed; her heart had been almost bursting with passion and pain, and now the pent-up tempest broke forth with a fury that racked

her little frame from head to foot; and the more because she strove to stifle every sound of it as much as possible. It was the very bitterness of sorrow, without any softening thought to allay it, and sharpened and made more bitter by mortification and a passionate sense of unkindness and wrong. And through it all, how constantly in her heart the poor child was reaching forth longing arms towards her far-off mother, and calling in secret on her beloved name. "Oh, mamma! mamma!" was repeated numberless times, with the unspeakable bitterness of knowing that she would have been a sure refuge and protection from all this trouble, but was now where she could neither reach nor hear her. Alas! how soon and how sadly missed.

Ellen's distress was not soon quieted, or, if quieted for a moment, it was only to break out afresh. And then she was glad to sit still and rest herself.

Presently she heard the voice of the chambermaid upstairs, at a distance at first, and coming nearer and nearer. "Breakfast ready, ladies—Ladies, breakfast ready!"—and then came all the people in a rush, pouring down the stairs over Ellen's head. She kept quite still and close, for she did not want to see anybody, and could not bear that anybody should see her. Nobody did see her; they all went off into the next cabin, where breakfast was set. Ellen began to grow tired of her hiding place and to feel restless in her confinement; she thought this would be a good time to get away; so she crept from her station under the stairs and mounted them as quick and as quietly as she could. She found almost nobody left in the saloon,—and breathing more freely, she possessed herself of her despised bonnet, which she had torn off her head in the first burst of her indignation, and passing gently out at the door, went up the stairs which led to the promenade deck;—she felt as if she could not get far enough from Mrs. Dunscombe.

The promenade deck was very pleasant in the bright morning sun; and nobody was there except a few gentlemen. Ellen sat down on one of the settees that were ranged along the middle of it, and, much pleased at having found herself such a nice place of retreat, she once more took up her interrupted amusement of watching the banks of the river.

It was a fair, mild day, near the end of October, and one of the loveliest of that lovely month. Poor Ellen, however, could not fairly enjoy it just now. There was enough darkness in her heart to put a veil over all nature's brightness. The thought did pass through her mind when she first went up, how very fair everything was;—but she soon forgot to think about it at all. They were now in a wide part of the river; and the shore towards which she was looking was low and distant, and offered nothing to interest her. She ceased to look at it, and presently lost all sense of everything around and before her, for her thoughts went home. She remembered that sweet moment last night when she lay in her mother's arms, after she had stopped singing, could it be only last night? it seemed a long, long time ago. She went over again in imagination her shocked waking up that very morning,—how cruel that was!—her hurried dressing,—the miserable parting,—and those last words of her mother, that seemed to ring in her ears yet. "That home where parting cannot be." "Oh," thought Ellen, "how shall I ever get there? who is there to teach me now? O, what shall I do without you? O, mamma! how much I want you already!"

While poor Ellen was thinking these things over and over, her little face had a deep sadness of expression it was sorrowful to see. She was perfectly calm; her violent excitement had all left her; her lip quivered a very little sometimes, but that was all; and one or two tears rolled slowly down the side of her face. Her eyes were fixed upon the dancing water, but it was very plain her thoughts were not, nor on anything else before her; and there was a forlorn look of hopeless sorrow on her lip and cheek and brow, enough to move anybody whose heart was not very hard. She was noticed, and with a feeling of compassion, by several people: but they all thought it was none of their business to speak to her, or they didn't know how. At length, a gentleman who had been for some time walking up and down the deck, happened to look, as he passed, at her little pale face. He went to the end of his walk that time, but in coming back he stopped just in front of her, and bending down his face towards hers, said, "What is the matter with you, my little friend?"

Though his figure had passed before her a great many times Ellen had not seen him at all; for "her eyes were with her heart, and that was far away." Her cheek flushed with surprise as she looked up. But there was no mistaking the look of kindness in the eyes that met hers, nor the gentleness and grave truthfulness of the whole countenance. It won her confidence immediately. All the floodgates of Ellen's heart were at once opened. She could not speak, but rising and clasping the hand that was held out to her in both her own, she bent down her head upon it, and burst into one of those uncontrollable agonies of weeping, such as the news of her mother's intended departure had occasioned that first sorrowful evening. He gently, and as soon as he could, drew her to a retired part of the deck where they were comparatively free from other people's eyes and ears; then taking her in his arms he endeavored by many kind and soothing words to stay the torrent of her grief. This fit of weeping did Ellen more good than the former one; that only exhausted, this in some little measure relieved her.

"What is all this about?" said her friend kindly. "Nay. never mind shedding any more tears about it, my child. Let me hear what it is; and perhaps we can find some help for it."

"Oh no you can't, sir," said Ellen sadly.

"Well, let us see," said he,—"perhaps I can. What is it that has troubled you so much?"

"I have lost my mother, sir," said Ellen.

"Your mother! Lost her!—how?"

"She is very ill, sir, and obliged to go away over the sea to France to get well; and papa could not take me with her," said poor Ellen, weeping again, "and I am obliged to go to be among strangers. O what shall I do!"

"Have you left your mother in the city?"

"Oh yes, sir! I left her this morning."

"What is your name?"

"Ellen Montgomery."

"Is your mother obliged to go to Europe for her health?"

"Oh yes, sir; nothing else would have made her go, but the doctor said she would not live long if she didn't go, and that would cure her."

"Then you hope to see her come back by-and-by, don't you?"

"Oh yes, sir; but it won't be this great, great, long while; it seems to me as if it was for ever."

"Ellen, do you know who it is that sends sickness and trouble upon us?"

"Yes, sir, I know; but I don't feel that that makes it any easier."

"Do you know *why* he sends it? He is the God of love,—he does not trouble us willingly,—he has said so;—why does he ever make us suffer? do you know?"

"No, sir."

"Sometimes he sees that if he lets them alone, his children will love some dear thing on the earth better than himself, and he knows they will not be happy if they do so; and then, because he loves them, he takes it away,—perhaps it is a dear mother, or a dear daughter,—or else he hinders their enjoyment of it; that they may remember him, and give their whole hearts to him. He wants their whole hearts, that he may bless them. Are you one of his children, Ellen?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, with swimming eyes, but cast down to the ground.

"How do you know that you are not?"

"Because I do not love the Saviour."

"Do you not love him, Ellen?"

"I am afraid not, sir."

"Why are you afraid not? what makes you think so?"

"Mamma said I could not love him at all if I did not love him best; and oh, sir," said Ellen weeping, "I do love mamma a great deal better."

"You love your mother better than you do the Saviour?"

"Oh yes, sir," said Ellen; "how can I help it?"

"Then if he had left you your mother, Ellen, you would never have cared or thought about him?"

Ellen was silent.

"Is it so?—would you, do you think?"

"I don't know, sir," said Ellen, weeping again,—"oh, sir! how can I help it?"

"Then, Ellen, can you not see the love of your Heavenly Father in this trial? He saw that his little child was in danger of forgetting him, and he loved you, Ellen; and so

he has taken your dear mother, and sent you away where you will have no one to look to but him; and now he says to you, 'My daughter, give *me* thy heart.'—Will you do it, Ellen?"

Ellen wept exceedingly while the gentleman was saying these words, clasping his hands still in both hers; but she made no answer. He waited till she had become calmer, and then went on in a low tone,—.

"What is the reason that you do not love the Saviour, my child?"

"Mamma says it is because my heart is so hard."

"That is true; but you do not know how good and how lovely he is, or you could not help loving him. Do you often think of him, and think much of him, and ask him to show you himself that you may love him?"

"No, sir," said Ellen,—"not often."

"You pray to him, don't you?"

"Yes, sir; but not so."

"But you ought to pray to him so. We are all blind by nature, Ellen;—we are all hard-hearted;—none of us can see him or love him unless he opens our eyes and touches our hearts; but he has promised to do this for those that seek him. Do you remember what the blind man said when Jesus asked him what he should do for him?—he answered, 'Lord, that I may receive my sight!' That ought to be your prayer now, and mine too; and the Lord is just as ready to hear us as he was to hear the poor blind man; and you know he cured him. Will you ask him, Ellen?"

A smile was almost struggling through Ellen's tears as she lifted her face to that of her friend, but she instantly looked down again.

"Shall I put you in mind, Ellen, of some things about Christ that ought to make you love him with all your heart?"

"Oh yes, sir! if you please."

"Then tell me first what it is that makes you love your mother so much?"

"O, I can't tell you, sir;—everything, I think."

"I suppose the great thing is that she loves *you* so much?"

"Oh yes, sir," said Ellen strongly.

"But how do you know that she loves you? how has she shown it?"

Ellen looked at him, but could give no answer; it seemed to her that she must bring the whole experience of her life before him to form one.

"I suppose," said her friend, "that, to begin with the smallest thing, she has always been watchfully careful to provide everything that could be useful or necessary for you:—she never forgot your wants, or was careless about them?"

"No indeed, sir."

"And perhaps you recollect that she never minded trouble or expense or pain where your good was concerned;—she would sacrifice her own pleasure at any time for yours?"

Ellen's eyes gave a quick and strong answer to this, but she said nothing.

"And in all your griefs and pleasures you were sure of finding her ready and willing to feel with you and for you, and to help you if she could? And in all the times you have seen her tried, no fatigue ever wore out her patience, nor any naughtiness of yours ever lessened her love; she could not be weary of waiting upon you when you were sick, nor of bearing with you when you forgot your duty,—more ready always to receive you than you to return. Isn't it so?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"And you can recollect a great many words and looks of kindness and love—many and many endeavors to teach you and lead you in the right way—all showing the strongest desire for your happiness in this world, and in the next?"

"Oh yes, sir," said Ellen tearfully; and then added, "Do you know my mother, sir?"

"No," said he, smiling, "not at all; but my own mother has been in many things like this to me, and I judged yours might have been such to you. Have I described her right?"

"Yes indeed, sir," said Ellen;—"exactly."

"And in return for all this, you have given this dear mother the love and gratitude of your whole heart, haven't you?"

"Indeed I have, sir;" and Ellen's face said it more than her words.

"You are very right," he said gravely, "to love such a mother—to give her all possible duty and affection;—she deserves it. But, Ellen, in all these very things I have been

mentioning, Jesus Christ has shown that he deserves it far more. Do you think, if you had never behaved like a child to your mother—if you had never made her the least return of love or regard—that she would have continued to love you as she does?"

"No, sir," said Ellen,—"I do not think she would."

"Have you ever made any fit return to God for his goodness to you?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, in a low tone.

"And yet there has been no change in *his* kindness. Just look at it, and see what he has done and is doing for you. In the first place, it is not your mother, but he, who has given you every good and pleasant thing you have enjoyed in your whole life. You love your mother because she is so careful to provide for all your wants; but who gave her the materials to work with? she has only been, as it were, the hand by which he supplied you. And who gave you such a mother?—there are many mothers not like her;—who put into her heart the truth and love that have been blessing you ever since you were born? It is all—all God's doing, from first to last; but his child has forgotten him in the very gifts of his mercy."

Ellen was silent, but looked very grave.

"Your mother never minded her own ease or pleasure when your good was concerned. Did Christ mind his? You know what he did to save sinners, don't you?"

"Yes, sir, I know; mamma often told me."

"'Though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.' He took your burden of sin upon himself, and suffered that terrible punishment—all to save you, and such as you. And now he asks his children to leave off sinning and come back to him who has bought them with his own blood. He did this because he *loved* you; does he not deserve to be loved in return?

Ellen had nothing to say; she hung down her head further and further.

"And patient and kind as your mother is, the Lord Jesus is kinder and more patient still. In all your life so far, Ellen, you have not loved or obeyed him; and yet he loves you, and is ready to be your friend. Is he not even to-day taking away your dear mother for the very purpose that he may draw you gently to himself and fold you in his arms, as he

has promised to do with his lambs? He knows you can never be happy anywhere else."

The gentleman paused again, for he saw that the little listener's mind was full.

"Has not Christ shown that he loves you better even than your mother does? And were there ever sweeter words of kindness than these?—

"'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

"'I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.'

"'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.'"

He waited a minute, and then added, gently, "Will you come to him, Ellen?"

Ellen lifted her tearful eyes to his; but there were tears there too, and her own sank instantly. She covered her face with her hands, and sobbed out in broken words, "Oh, if I could!—but I don't know how."

"Do you wish to be his child, Ellen?"

"Oh yes, sir—if I could."

"I know, my child, that sinful heart of yours is in the way, but the Lord Jesus can change it, and will, if you will give it to him. He is looking upon you now, Ellen, with more kindness and love than any earthly father or mother could, waiting for you to give that little heart of yours to him, that he may make it holy and fill it with blessing. He says, you know, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock.' Do not grieve him away, Ellen."

Ellen sobbed, but all the passion and bitterness of her tears was gone. Her heart was completely melted.

"If your mother were here, and could do for you what you want, would you doubt her love to do it? would you have any difficulty in asking her?"

"Oh no!"

"Then do not doubt his love who loves you better still. Come to Jesus. Do not fancy he is away up in heaven out of reach or hearing,—he is here, close to you, and knows every wish and throb of your heart. Think you are in his presence and at his feet,—even now,—and say to him in your heart, 'Lord, look upon me—I am not fit to come to

thee, but thou hast bid me come—take me and make me thine own—take this hard heart that I can do nothing with, and make it holy and fill it with thy love—I give it and myself into thy hands, O dear Saviour!'"

These words were spoken very low, that only Ellen could catch them. Her bowed head sank lower and lower till he ceased speaking. He added no more for some time; waited till she had resumed her usual attitude and appearance, and then said,—

"Ellen, could you join in heart with my words?"

"I did, sir,—I couldn't help it,—all but the last."

"All but the last?"

"Yes, sir."

"But, Ellen, if you say the first part of my prayer with your whole heart, the Lord will enable you to say the last too,—do you believe that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you not make that your constant prayer till you are heard and answered?"

"Yes, sir."

And he thought he saw that she was in earnest.

"Perhaps the answer may not come at once,—it does not always;—but it will come, as surely as the sun will rise to-morrow morning. 'Then shall we know, if we *follow on* to know the Lord.' But then you must be in earnest. And if you are in earnest, is there nothing you have to do besides *praying?*"

Ellen looked at him without making any answer.

"When a person is in earnest, how does he show it?"

"By doing everything he possibly can to get what he wants."

"Quite right," said her friend, smiling;—"and has God bidden us do nothing besides pray for a new heart?"

"O yes, sir,—he has told us to do a great many things."

"And will he be likely to grant that prayer, Ellen, if he sees that you do not care about displeasing him in those 'great many things?'—will he judge that you are sincere in wishing for a new heart?"

"Oh no, sir!"

"Then if you are resolved to be a Christian, you will not be contented with praying for a new heart, but you will begin

at once to be a servant of God. You can do nothing well without help, but you are sure the help will come; and from this good day you will seek to know and to do the will of God, trusting in his dear son to perfect that which concerneth you.—My little child," said the gentleman softly and kindly, "are you ready to say you will do this?"

As she hesitated, he took a little book from his pocket, and turning over the leaves, said, "I am going to leave you for a little while—I have a few moment's business down stairs to attend to; and I want you to look over this hymn and think carefully of what I have been saying, will you?—and resolve what you will do."

Ellen got off his knee, where she had been sitting all this while, and silently taking the book, sat down in the chair he had quitted. Tears ran fast again, and many thoughts passed through her mind, as her eyes went over and over the words to which he had pointed:

"Behold the Saviour at thy door,
He gently knocks,—has knocked before,—
Has waited long,—is waiting still,—
You treat no other friend so ill.

"Oh lovely attitude!—he stands
With open heart and outstretched hands.
Oh matchless kindness!—and he shows
This matchless kindness to his foes.

"Admit him—for the human breast
Ne'er entertained so kind a guest.
Admit him—or the hour's at hand
When at *his* door, denied, you'll stand.

"Open my heart, Lord, enter in;
Slay every foe, and conquer sin.
Here now to thee I all resign,—
My body, soul, and all are thine."

The last two lines Ellen longed to say, but could not; the two preceding were the very speech of her heart.

Not more than fifteen minutes had passed when her friend came back again. The book hung in Ellen's hand; her eyes were fixed on the floor.

"Well," he said kindly, and taking her hand, "what's your decision?"

Ellen looked up.

"Have you made up your mind on that matter we were talking about?"

"Yes, sir," Ellen said in a low voice, casting her eyes down again.

"And how have you decided, my child?"

"I will try to do as you said, sir."

"You will begin to follow your Saviour, and to please him, from this day forward?"

"I will try, sir," said Ellen, meeting his eyes as she spoke. Again the look she saw made her burst into tears. She wept violently.

"God bless you and help you, my dear Ellen," said he, gently passing his hand over her head;—"but do not cry any more—you have shed too many tears this morning already. We will not talk about this any more now."

And he spoke only soothing and quieting words for a while to her; and then asked if she would like to go over the boat and see the different parts of it. Ellen's joyful agreement with this proposal was only qualified by the fear of giving him trouble. But he put that entirely by.

CHAPTER VIII.

Time and the hour run through the roughest day.
SHAKSPEARE.

THE going over the boat held them a long time, for Ellen's new friend took kind pains to explain to her whatever he thought he could make interesting; he was amused to find how far she pushed her inquiries into the how and the why of things. For the time her sorrows were almost forgotten.

"What shall we do now?" said he, when they had at last gone through the whole;—"would you like to go to your friends?"

"I haven't any friends on board, sir," said Ellen, with a swelling heart.

"Haven't any friends on board! what do you mean? Are you alone?"

"No sir," said Ellen,—"not exactly alone; my father put me in the care of a lady that is going to Thirlwall;—but they are strangers and not friends."

"Are they *un*friends? I hope you don't think Ellen, that strangers cannot be friends too?"

"No indeed, sir, I don't!" said Ellen, looking up with a face that was fairly brilliant with its expression of gratitude and love. But casting it down again, she added, "But they are not my friends, sir."

"Well then," he said, smiling, "will you come with me;"

"O yes sir! if you will let me,—and if I sha'n't be a trouble to you, sir."

"Come this way," said he, "and we'll see if we cannot find a nice place to sit down, where no one will trouble us."

Such a place was found. And Ellen would have been quite satisfied though the gentleman had done no more than merely permit her to remain there by his side; but he took

out his little Bible, and read and talked to her for some time, so pleasantly that neither her weariness nor the way could be thought of.

When he ceased reading to her and began to read to himself, weariness and faintness stole over her. She had had nothing to eat, and had been violently excited that day. A little while she sat in a dreamy sort of quietude,—then her thoughts grew misty,—and the end of it was, she dropped her head against the arm of her friend and fell fast asleep. He smiled at first, but one look at the very pale little face changed the expression of his own. He gently put his arm round her and drew her head to a better resting-place than it had chosen.

And there she slept till the dinner-bell rang. Timmins was sent out to look for her, but Timmins did not choose to meddle with the grave protector Ellen seemed to have gained; and Mrs. Dunscombe declared herself rejoiced that any other hands should have taken the charge of her.

After dinner, Ellen and her friend went up to the promenade deck again, and there for a while they paced up and down, enjoying the pleasant air and quick motion, and the lovely appearance of everything in the mild hazy sunlight. Another gentleman however joining them, and entering into conversation, Ellen silently quitted her friend's hand and went and sat down at the side of the boat. After taking a few turns more, and while still engaged in talking, he drew his little hymn-book out of his pocket, and with a smile put it into Ellen's hand as he passed. She gladly received it, and spent an hour or more very pleasantly in studying and turning it over. At the end of that time, the stranger having left him, Ellen's friend came and sat down by her side.

"How do you like my little book?" said he.

"O very much indeed, sir."

"Then you love hymns, do you?"

"Yes I do, sir, dearly."

"Do you sometimes learn them by heart?"

"O yes, sir, often. Mamma often made me. I have learnt two since I have been sitting here."

"Have you?" said he;—"which are they?"

"One of them is the one you showed me this morning, sir."

"And what is your mind now about the question I asked you this morning?"

Ellen cast down her eyes from his inquiring glance, and answered in a low tone, "Just what it was then, sir."

"Have you been thinking of it since?"

"I have thought of it the whole time, sir."

"And you are resolved you will obey Christ henceforth?"

"I am resolved to try, sir."

"My dear Ellen, if you are in earnest you will not try in vain. He never yet failed any that sincerely sought him. Have you a Bible?"

"O yes, sir! a beautiful one; mamma gave it to me the other day."

He took the hymn book from her hand, and turning over the leaves, marked several places in pencil.

"I am going to give you this," he said, "that it may serve to remind you of what we have talked of to-day, and of your resolution."

Ellen flushed high with pleasure.

"I have put this mark," said he, showing her a particular one, "in a few places of this book, for you; wherever you find it, you may know there is something I want you to take special notice of. There are some other marks here too, but they are mine: *these* are for you."

"Thank you, sir," said Ellen, delighted; "I shall not forget."

He knew from her face what she meant;—not the *marks*.

The day wore on, thanks to the unwearied kindness of her friend, with great comparative comfort to Ellen. Late in the afternoon they were resting from a long walk up and down the deck.

"What have you got in this package that you take such care of?" said he, smiling.

"O! candies," said Ellen; "I am always forgetting them. I meant to ask you to take some. Will you have some, sir?"

"Thank you. What are they?"

"Almost all kinds, I believe, sir; I think the almonds are the best."

He took one.

"Pray, take some more, sir," said Ellen;—"I don't care for them in the least."

"Then I am more of a child than you,—in this at any rate,—for I do care for them. But I have a little headache to-day; I mustn't meddle with sweets."

"Then take some for to-morrow, sir;—please do!" said Ellen, dealing them out very freely.

"Stop, stop!" said he,—"not a bit more; this won't do,—I must put some of these back again; you'll want them to-morrow too."

"I don't think I shall," said Ellen;—"I haven't wanted to touch them to-day."

"O, you'll feel brighter to-morrow, after a night's sleep. But aren't you afraid of catching cold? This wind is blowing pretty fresh, and you've been bonnetless all day;—what's the reason?"

Ellen looked down, and coloured a good deal.

"What's the matter?" said he, laughing; "has any mischief befallen your bonnet?"

"No, sir," said Ellen in a low tone, her color mounting higher and higher;—"it was laughed at this morning."

"Laughed at!—who laughed at it?"

"Mrs. Dunscombe and her daughter, and her maid."

"Did they! I don't see much reason in that, I confess. What did they think was the matter with it?"

"I don't know, sir;—they said it was outlandish, and what a figure I looked in it."

"Well, certainly that was not very polite. Put it on and let me see."

Ellen obeyed.

"I am not the best judge of ladies' bonnets, it is true," said he, "but I can see nothing about it that is not perfectly proper and suitable,—nothing in the world! So that is what has kept you bareheaded all day? Didn't your mother wish you to wear that bonnet?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then that ought to be enough for you. Will you be ashamed of what *she* approved, because some people that haven't probably half her sense choose to make merry with it?—is that right?" he said gently, "Is that honouring her as she deserves?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, looking up into his face, "but I never thought of that before;—I am sorry."

"Never mind being laughed at, my child. If your mother says a thing is right, that's enough for you—let them laugh!"

"I won't be ashamed of my bonnet any more," said Ellen, tying it on; "but they made me very unhappy about it, and very angry too."

"I am sorry for that," said her friend, gravely. "Have you quite got over it, Ellen?"

"O yes, sir,—long ago."

"Are you sure?"

"I am not angry now, sir."

"Is there no unkindness left towards the people who laughed at you?"

"I don't like them much," said Ellen;—"how can I?"

"You cannot of course *like* the company of ill-behaved people, and I do not wish that you should; but you can and ought to feel just as kindly disposed towards them as if they had never offended you—just as willing and inclined to please them or do them good. Now, could you offer Miss—what's her name?—some of your candies with as hearty good-will as you could before she laughed at you?"

"No, sir, I couldn't. I don't feel as if I ever wished to see them again."

"Then, my dear Ellen, you have something to do, if you were in earnest in the resolve you made this morning. 'If ye forgive unto men their trespasses, my Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will my father forgive your trespasses!'"

He was silent, and so was Ellen, for some time. His words had raised a struggle in her mind; and she kept her face turned towards the shore, so that her bonnet shielded it from view; but she did not in the least know what she was looking at. The sun had been some time descending through a sky of cloudless splendor, and now was just kissing the mountain tops of the western horizon. Slowly and with great majesty he sank behind the distant blue line, till only a glittering edge appeared,—and then that was gone. There were no clouds hanging over his setting, to be gilded and purpled

by the parting rays, but a region of glory long remained, to show where his path had been.

The eyes of both were fixed upon this beautiful scene, but only one was thinking of it. Just as the last glimpse of the sun disappeared Ellen turned her face, bright again, towards her companion. He was intently gazing towards the hills that had so drawn Ellen's attention a while ago, and thinking still more intently, it was plain; so though her mouth had been open to speak, she turned her face away again as suddenly as it had just sought his. He saw the motion, however.

"What is it, Ellen?" he said.

Ellen looked again with a smile.

"I have been thinking, sir, of what you said to me."

"Well?" said he, smiling in answer.

"I can't *like* Mrs. Dunscombe and Miss Dunscombe as well as if they hadn't done so to me, but I will try to behave as if nothing had been the matter, and be as kind and polite to them as if they had been kind and polite to me."

"And how about the sugar-plums?"

"The sugar-plums! O," said Ellen, laughing, "Miss Margaret may have them all if she likes—I'm quite willing. Not but I had rather give them to you, sir."

"You give me something a great deal better when I see you try to overcome a wrong feeling. You mustn't rest till you get rid of every bit of ill-will that you feel for this and any other unkindness you may suffer. You cannot do it yourself, but you know who can help you. I hope you have asked him, Ellen?"

"I have, sir, indeed."

"Keep asking him, and he will do everything for you."

A silence of some length followed. Ellen began to feel very much the fatigue of this exciting day, and sat quietly by her friend's side, leaning against him. The wind had changed about sundown, and now blew light from the south, so that they did not feel it all.

The light gradually faded away, till only a silver glow in the west showed where the sun had set, and the sober gray of twilight was gently stealing over all the bright colors of sky, and river, and hill; now and then a twinkling light began to appear along the shores.

"You are very tired," said Ellen's friend to her,—"I see

you are. A little more patience, my child;—we shall be at our journey's end before a very great while."

"I am almost sorry," said Ellen, "though I *am* tired. We don't go in the steamboat to-morrow; do we, sir?"

"No,—in the stage."

"Shall *you* be in the stage, sir?"

"No, my child. But I am glad you and I have spent this day together."

"Oh, sir!" said Ellen, "I don't know what I should have done if it hadn't been for you!"

There was silence again, and the gentleman almost thought his little charge had fallen asleep, she sat so still. But she suddenly spoke again, and in a tone of voice that showed sleep was far away.

"I wish I knew where mamma is now!"

"I do not doubt, my child, from what you told me, that it is well with her wherever she is. Let that thought comfort you whenever you remember her."

"She must want me so much," said poor Ellen, in a scarcely audible voice.

"She has not lost her best friend, my child."

"I know it, sir," said Ellen, with whom grief was now getting the mastery,—"but O! it's just near the time when I used to make the tea for her—who'll make it now? she'll want me,—oh what shall I do!" and overcome completely by this recollection, she threw herself into her friend's arms and sobbed aloud.

There was no reasoning against this. He did not attempt it; but with the utmost gentleness and tenderness endeavored, as soon as he might, to soothe and calm her. He succeeded at last; with a sort of despairing submission, Ellen ceased her tears, and arose to her former position. But he did not rest from his kind endeavors till her mind was really eased and comforted; which, however, was not long before the lights of a city began to appear in the distance. And with them appeared a dusky figure ascending the stairs, which, upon nearer approach, proved by the voice to be Timmins.

"Is this Miss Montgomery?" said she;—"I can't see, I am sure, it's so dark. Is that you, Miss Montgomery?"

"Yes," said Ellen, "it is I; do you want me?"

"If you please, Miss, Mrs. Dunscombe wants you to come right down; we're almost in, she says, Miss.

"I'll come directly, Miss Timmins," said Ellen. "Don't wait for me,—I won't be a minute,—I'll come directly."

Miss Timmins retired, standing still a good deal in awe of the grave personage whose protection Ellen seemed to have gained.

"I must go," said Ellen, standing up and extending her hand;—"Good-bye, sir."

She could hardly say it. He drew her towards him and kissed her cheek once or twice; it was well he did; for it sent a thrill of pleasure to Ellen's heart that she did not get over that evening, nor all the next day.

"God bless you, my child," he said, gravely but cheerfully; "and good night!—you will feel better I trust when you have had some rest and refreshment."

He took care of her down the stairs, and saw her safe to the very door of the saloon, and within it; and there again took her hand and kindly bade her good night!

Ellen entered the saloon only to sit down and cry as if her heart would break. She saw and heard nothing till Mrs. Dunscombe's voice bade her make haste and be ready, for they were going ashore in five minutes.

And in less than five minutes ashore they went.

"Which hotel, ma'am?" asked the servant who carried her baggage,—"the Eagle, or Foster's?"

"The Eagle," said Mrs. Dunscombe.

"Come this way then, ma'am," said another man, the driver of the Eagle carriage,—"Now ma'am, step in, if you please."

Mrs. Dunscombe put her daughter in.

"But it's full!" said she to the driver; "there isn't room for another one!"

"O yes, ma'am, there is," said the driver, holding the door open; "there's plenty of room for you, ma'am,—just get in, ma'am, if you please,—we'll be there in less that two minutes."

"Timmins, you'll have to walk," said Mrs. Dunscombe. "Miss Montgomery, would you rather ride, or walk with Timmins?"

"How far is it, ma'am?" said Ellen.

"O bless me! how can I tell how far it is? I don't know, I am sure,—not far;—say quick,—would you rather walk or ride?"

"I would rather walk, ma'am, if you please," said Ellen.

"Very well," said Mrs. Dunscombe, getting in;—"Timmins, you know the way."

And off went the coach with it's load; but tired as she was, Ellen did not wish herself along.

Picking a passage-way out of the crowd, she and Timmins now began to make their way up one of the comparatively quiet streets.

It was a strange place—that she felt. She had lived long enough in the place she had left to feel at home there; but here she came to no street or crossing that she had ever seen before; nothing looked familiar; all reminded her that she was a traveler. Only one pleasant thing Ellen saw on her walk, and that was the sky; and that looked just as it did at home; and very often Ellen's gaze was fixed upon it, much to the astonishment of Miss Timmins, who had to be not a little watchful for the safety of Ellen's feet while her eyes were thus employed. She had taken a great fancy to Ellen, however, and let her do as she pleased, keeping all her wonderment to herself.

"Take care, Miss Ellen!" cried Timmins, giving her arm a great pull,—"I declare I just saved you out of that gutter! poor child! you are dreadfully tired, aint you?"

"Yes, I am very tired, Miss Timmins," said Ellen, "have we much further to go?"

"Not a great deal, dear; cheer up! we are almost there. I hope Mrs. Dunscombe will want to ride one of these days herself, and can't."

"O don't say so, Miss Timmins," said Ellen,—"I don't wish so, indeed."

"Well I should think you would," said Timmins,—"I should think you 'd be fit to poison her;—*I* should, I know, if I was in your place."

"O no," said Ellen, "that wouldn't be right,—that would be very wrong."

"Wrong!" said Timmins,—"why would it be wrong? she hasn't behaved good to you."

"Yes," said Ellen,—"but don't you know the Bible says if we do not forgive people what they do to us, we shall not be forgiven ourselves?"

"Well, I declare!" said Miss Timmins, "you beat all! But here's the Eagle hotel at last,—and I am glad for your sake, dear."

Ellen was shown into the ladies' parlor. She was longing for a place to rest, but she saw directly it was not to be there. The room was large, and barely furnished; and round it were scattered part of the carriage-load of people that had arrived a quarter of an hour before her. They were waiting till their rooms should be ready. Ellen silently found herself a chair and sat down to wait with the rest, as patiently as she might. Few of them had as much cause for impatience; but she was the only perfectly mute and uncomplaining one there. Her two companions however, between them, fully made up her share of fretting. At length, a servant brought the welcome news that their room was ready, and the three marched up stairs. It made Ellen's very heart glad when they got there, to find a good-sized, cheerful-looking bed-room, comfortably furnished, with a bright fire burning, large curtains let down to the floor, and a nice warm carpet upon it. Taking off her bonnet, and only that, she sat down on a low cushion by the corner of the fire-place, and leaning her head against the jamb fell fast asleep almost immediately. Mrs. Dunscombe set about arranging herself for the tea-table.

"Well!" she said,—"one day of this precious journey is over!"

"Does Ellen go with us to-morrow, mamma?"

"Oh, yes!—quite to Thirlwall."

"Well you haven't had much plague with her to-day, mamma."

"No—I am sure I am much obliged to whoever has kept her out of my way."

"Where is she going to sleep to-night?" asked Miss Margaret.

"I don't know, I am sure.—I suppose I shall have to have a cot brought in here for her."

"What a plague!" said Miss Margaret. "It will lumber

up the room so! There's no place to put it. Couldn't she sleep with Timmins?"

"O, she *could*, of course—just as well as not, only people would make such a fuss about it;—it wouldn't do; we must bear it for once. I'll try and not be caught in such a scrape again."

"How provoking!" said Miss Margaret;—"how came father to do so without asking you about it?"

"O, he was bewitched, I suppose,—men always are. Look here, Margaret,—I can't go down to tea with a train of children at my heels,—I shall leave you and Ellen up here, and I'll send up your tea to you."

"O no, mamma!" said Margaret eagerly; "I want to go down with you. Look here, mamma! she's asleep and you needn't wake her up—that's excuse enough; you can leave her to have her tea up here, and let me go down with you."

"Well," said Mrs. Dunscombe,—"I don't care—but make haste to get ready, for I expect every minute when the tea-bell will ring."

"Timmins! Timmins!" cried Margaret,—"come here and fix me—quick!—and step softly, will you?—or you'll wake that young one up, and then, you see, I shall have to stay up stairs."

This did not happen however. Ellen's sleep was much too deep to be easily disturbed. The tea-bell itself, loud and shrill as it was, did not even make her eye-lids tremble. After Mrs. and Miss Dunscombe were gone down, Timmins employed herself a little while in putting all things about the room to rights; and then sat down to take *her* rest, dividing her attention between the fire and Ellen, towards whom she seemed to feel more and more kindness, as she saw that she was likely to receive it from no one else. Presently came a knock at the door;—"The tea for the young lady," on a waiter. Miss Timmins silently took the tray from the man and shut the door. "Well!" said she to herself,—"if that aint a pretty supper to send up to a child that has gone two hundred miles to-day, and had no breakfast!—a cup of tea, cold enough I'll warrant,—bread and butter enough for a bird,—and two little slices of ham as thick as a wafer!—well, I just wish Mrs. Dunscombe had to eat it herself, and nothing

else!—I'm not going to wake her up for that, I know, till I see whether something better aint to be had for love nor money. So just you sleep on, darling, till I see what I can do for you."

In great indignation, down stairs went Miss Timmins; and at the foot of the stairs she met a rosy-cheeked, pleasant-faced girl coming up.

"Are you the chambermaid?" said Timmins.

"I'm *one* of the chambermaids," said the girl smiling; there's three of us in this house, dear."

"Well, I am a stranger here," said Timmins, "and I want you to help me, and I am sure you will. I've got a dear little girl up-stairs that I want some supper for—she's a sweet child, and she's under the care of some proud folks here in the tea-room that think it's too much trouble to look at her; and they've sent her up about supper enough for a mouse,—and she half starving; she lost her breakfast this morning by their ugliness. Now ask one of the waiters to give me something nice for her, will you?—there's a good girl."

"James!"—said the girl in a loud whisper to one of the waiters who was crossing the hall. He instantly stopped and came towards them, tray in hand, and making several extra polite bows as he drew near.

"What's on the supper-table, James?" said the smiling damsel.

"Everything that ought to be there, Miss Johns," said the man, with another flourish.

"Come, stop your nonsense," said the girl, "and tell me quick—I'm in a hurry."

"It's a pleasure to perform your commands, Miss Johns. I'll give you the whole bill of fare. There's a very fine beef-steak, fricasseed chickens, stewed oysters, sliced ham, cheese, preserved quinces,—with the usual compliment of bread and toast and muffins, and doughnuts, and new year cake, and plenty of butter,—likewise salt and pepper,—likewise tea and coffee, and sugar,—likewise,—"

"Hush!" said the girl. "Do stop, will you?"—and then laughing and turning to Miss Timmins, she added, "What will you have?"

"I guess I'll have some of the chickens and oysters," said

Timmins; "that will be the nicest for her,—and a muffin or two."

"Now, James, do you hear?" said the chambermaid; "I want you to get me now, right away, a nice little supper of chickens and oysters and a muffin—it's for a lady up stairs. Be as quick as you can."

"I should be very happy to execute impossibilities for you, Miss Johns, but Mrs. Custers is at the table herself."

"Very well—that's nothing—she'll think it's for somebody up stairs—and so it is."

"Ay, but the up-stairs people is Tim's business—I should be hauled over the coals directly."

"Then ask Tim, will you? How slow you are! Now, James, if you don't, I won't speak to you again."

"Till to-morrow?—I couldn't stand that. It shall be done, Miss Johns, instantum."

Bowing and smiling, away went James, leaving the girls giggling on the stair-case and highly gratified.

"He always does what I want him to," said the good-humored chambermaid, "but he generally makes a fuss about it first. He'll be back directly with what you want."

Till he came, Miss Timmins filled up the time with telling her new friend as much as she knew about Ellen and Ellen's hardships; with which Miss Johns was so much interested that she declared she must go up and see her; and when James in a few minutes returned with a tray of nice things, the two women proceeded together to Mrs. Dunscombe's room. Ellen had moved so far as to put herself on the floor with her head on the cushion for a pillow, but she was as sound asleep as ever.

"Just see now!" said Timmins; "there she lies on the floor—enough to give her her death of cold; poor child, she's tired to death; and Mrs. Dunscombe made her walk up from the steamboat to-night rather than do it herself;—I declare I wished the coach would break down, only for the other folks. I am glad I have got a good supper for her though,—thank *you*, Miss Johns."

"And I'll tell you what, I'll go and get you some nice hot tea," said the chambermaid, who was quite touched by the sight of Ellen's little pale face.

"Thank you," said Timmins,—"you're a darling. This is as cold as a stone."

While the chambermaid went forth on her kind errand, Timmins stooped down by the little sleeper's side. "Miss Ellen!" she said;—"Miss Ellen!—wake up, dear—wake up and get some supper—come! you'll feel a great deal better for it—you shall sleep as much as you like afterwards."

Slowly Ellen raised herself and opened her eyes. "Where am I?" she asked, looking bewildered.

"Here, dear," said Timmins;—"wake up and eat something—it will do you good."

With a sigh, poor Ellen arose and came to the fire. "You're tired to death, aint you?" said Timmins.

"Not quite," said Ellen. "I shouldn't mind that if my legs would not ache so—and my head, too.

"Now I'm sorry!" said Timmins; "but your head will be better for eating, I know. See here—I've got you some nice chicken and oysters,—and I'll make this muffin hot for you by the fire; and here comes your tea. Miss Johns, I'm your servant, and I'll be your bridesmaid with the greatest pleasure in life. Now, Miss Ellen, dear, just you put yourself on that low chair, and I'll fix you off."

Ellen thanked her, and did as she was told. Timmins brought another chair to her side, and placed the tray with her supper upon it, and prepared her muffin and tea; and having fairly seen Ellen begin to eat, she next took off her shoes, and seating herself on the carpet before her, she made her lap the resting place for Ellen's feet, chafing them in her hands and heating them at the fire; saying there was nothing like rubbing and roasting to get rid of the leg-ache. By the help of the supper, the fire, and Timmins, Ellen mended rapidly. With tears in her eyes, she thanked the latter for her kindness.

"Now just don't say one word about that," said Timmins; "I never was famous for kindness, as I know; but people must be kind sometimes in their lives,—unless they happen to be made of stone, which I believe some people are. You feel better, don't you?"

"A great deal," said Ellen. "Oh, if I only could go to bed, now!"

"And you shall," said Timmins. "I know about your

bed, and I'll go right away and have it brought in." And away she went.

While she was gone, Ellen drew from her pocket her little hymn-book, to refresh herself with looking at it. How quickly and freshly it brought back to her mind the friend who had given it, and his conversations with her, and the resolve she had made; and again Ellen's whole heart offered the prayer she had repeated many times that day,—

> "Open my heart, Lord, enter in;
> Slay every foe, and conquer sin."

Her head was still bent upon her little book when Timmins entered. Timmins was not alone; Miss Johns and a little cot bedstead came in with her. The latter was put at the foot of Mrs. Dunscombe's bed, and speedily made up by the chambermaid, while Timmins undressed Ellen; and very soon all the sorrows and vexations of the day were forgotten in a sound, refreshing sleep. But not till she had removed her little hymn-book from the pocket of her frock to a safe station under her pillow; it was with her hand upon it that Ellen went to sleep; and it was in her hand still when she was waked the next morning.

The next day was spent in a wearisome stage-coach, over a rough, jolting road. Ellen's companions did nothing to make her way pleasant, but she sweetened theirs with her sugar-plums. Somewhat mollified, perhaps, after that, Miss Margaret condescended to enter into conversation with her, and Ellen underwent a thorough cross-examination as to all her own and her parent's affairs, past, present, and future, and likewise as to all that could be known of her yesterday's friend, till she was heartily worried, and out of patience.

It was just five o'clock when they reached her stopping-place. Ellen knew of no particular house to go to; so Mrs. Dunscombe set her down at the door of the principal inn of the town, called the "Star" of Thirlwall.

The driver smacked his whip, and away went the stage again, and she was left standing alone beside her trunk before the piazza of the inn, watching Timmins, who was looking back at her out of the stage window, nodding and waving good-bye.

CHAPTER IX.

Gadsby.—Sirrah carrier, what time do you mean to come to London?
2*nd Car.*—Time enough to go to bed with a candle, I warrant thee.
KING HENRY IV.

ELLEN had been whirled along over the roads for so many hours,—the rattle of the stage coach had filled her ears for so long,—that now, suddenly still and quiet, she felt half stunned. She stood with a kind of dreamy feeling, looking after the departing stage-coach. In it there were three people whose faces she knew, and she could not count a fourth within many a mile. One of those was a friend, too, as the fluttering handkerchief of poor Miss Timmins gave token still. Yet Ellen did not wish herself back in the coach, although she continued to stand and gaze after it as it rattled off at a great rate down the little street, its huge body lumbering up and down every now and then, reminding her of sundry uncomfortable jolts; till the horses making a sudden turn to the right, it disappeared round a corner. Still for a minute Ellen watched the whirling cloud of dust it had left behind; but then the feeling of strangeness and loneliness came over her, and her heart sank. She cast a look up and down the street. The afternoon was lovely; the slant beams of the setting sun came back from gilded windows, and the houses and chimney-tops of the little town were in a glow; but she saw nothing bright anywhere;—in all the glory of the setting sun the little town looked strange and miserable. There was no sign of her having been expected; nobody was waiting to meet her. What was to be done next? Ellen had not the slightest idea.

Her heart growing fainter and fainter, she turned again to the inn. A tall, awkward young countryman, with a cap set on one side of his head, was busying himself with sweeping off the floor of the piazza, but in a very leisurely manner; and

between every two strokes of his broom he was casting long looks at Ellen, evidently wondering who she was and what she could want there. Ellen saw it, and hoped he would ask her in words, for she could not answer his *looks* of curiosity,—but she was disappointed. As he reached the end of the piazza and gave his broom two or three knocks against the edge of the boards to clear it of dust, he indulged himself with one good long finishing look at Ellen, and then she saw he was going to take himself and his broom into the house. So in despair she ran up the two or three low steps of the piazza and presented herself before him. He stopped short.

"Will you please to tell me, sir," said poor Ellen, "if Miss Emerson is here?"

"Miss Emerson?" said he,—"what Miss Emerson?"

"I don't know, sir,—Miss Emerson that lives not far from Thirlwall."

Eyeing Ellen from head to foot, the man then trailed his broom into the house. Ellen followed him.

"Mr. Forbes!" said he,—"Mr. Forbes! do you know anything of Miss Emerson?"

"What Miss Emerson?" said another man, with a big red face and a big round body, showing himself in a doorway which he nearly filled.

"Miss Emerson that lives a little way out of town."

"Miss Fortune Emerson? yes, I know her. What of her?"

"Has she been here to-day?"

"Here? what, in town? No—not as I've seen or heerd. Why, who wants her?"

"This little girl."

And the man with the broom stepping back, disclosed Ellen to the view of the red-faced landlord. He advanced a step or two towards her.

"What do you want with Miss Fortune, little one?" said he.

"I expected she would meet me here, sir," said Ellen.

"Where have you come from?"

"From New York."

"The stage set her down just now," put in the other man.

"And you thought Miss Fortune would meet you, did you?"

"Yes, sir; she was to meet me and take me home."

"Take you home! Are you going to Miss Fortune's home?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why you don't belong to her anyway, do you?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, "but she's my aunt."

"She's your what?"

"My aunt, sir,—my father's sister."

"Your father's sister! You ben't the daughter of Morgan Montgomery, be you?"

"Yes, I am," said Ellen, half smiling.

"And you are come to make a visit to Miss Fortune, eh?"

"Yes," said Ellen, smiling no longer.

"And Miss Fortune ha'n't come up to meet you;—that's real shabby of her; and how to get you down there to-night, I am sure is more than I can tell."—And he shouted, "Wife!"

"What's the matter, Mr. Forbes?" said a fat landlady, appearing in the doorway, which she filled near as well as her husband would have done.

"Look here," said Mr. Forbes, "here's Morgan Montgomery's daughter come to pay a visit to her aunt, Fortune Emerson. Don't you think she'll be glad to see her?"

Mr. Forbes put this question with rather a curious look at his wife. She didn't answer him. She only looked at Ellen, looked grave, and gave a queer little nod of her head, which meant, Ellen could not make out what.

"Now, what's to be done?" continued Mr. Forbes. "Miss Fortune was to have come up to meet her, but she aint here, and I don't know how in the world I can take the child down there to-night. The horses are both out to plough, you know; and besides, the tire is come off that wagon wheel. I couldn't possibly use it. And then it's a great question in my mind what Miss Fortune would say to me. I should get paid, I s'pose?"

"Yes, you'd get paid," said his wife, with another little shake of her head; "but whether it would be the kind of pay you'd like, *I* don't know."

"Well, what's to be done, wife? Keep the child overnight, and send word down yonder?"

"No," said Mrs. Forbes, "I'll tell you. I think I saw Van Brunt go by two or three hours ago with the ox-cart, and I guess he's somewhere up town yet; I ha'n't seen him

go back. He can take the child home with him. "Sam!" shouted Mrs. Forbes,—"Sam!—here!—Sam, run up street directly, and see if you see Mr. Van Brunt's ox-cart standing anywhere—I dare say he's at Mr. Miller's, or maybe at Mr. Hammersley's, the blacksmith—and ask him to stop here before he goes home. Now hurry!—and don't run over him and then come back and tell me he aint in town."

Mrs. Forbes herself followed Sam to the door, and cast an exploring look in every direction.

"I don't see no signs of him,—up nor down," said she, returning to Ellen; "but I'm pretty sure he aint gone home. Come in here—come in here, dear, and make yourself comfortable; it'll be a while yet maybe 'afore Mr. Van Brunt comes, but he'll be along by-and-by;—come in here and rest yourself."

She opened a door, and Ellen followed her into a large kitchen, where a fire was burning that showed wood must be plenty in those regions. Mrs. Forbes placed a low chair for her on the hearth, but herself remained standing by the side of the fire, looking earnestly and with a good deal of interest upon the little stranger. Ellen drew her white bonnet from her head, and sitting down with a wearied air, gazed sadly into the flames that were shedding their light upon her.

"Are you going to stop a good while with Miss Fortune?" said Mrs. Forbes.

"I don't know, ma'am,—yes, I believe so," said Ellen faintly.

"Ha'n't you got no mother?" asked Mrs. Forbes suddenly, after a pause.

"Oh yes!" said Ellen, looking up. But the question had touched the sore spot. Her head sank on her hands, and "Oh mamma!" was uttered with a bitterness that even Mrs. Forbes could feel.

"Now what made me ask you that!" said she. "Don't cry!—don't, love; poor little dear! you're as pale as a sheet; you're tired, I know—aint you? Now cheer up, do,—I can't bear to see you cry. You've come a great ways today, ha'n't you?"

Ellen nodded her head, but could give no answer.

"I know what will do you good," said Mrs. Forbes presently, getting up from the crouching posture she had taken

to comfort Ellen; "you want something to eat,—that's the matter. I'll warrant you're half starved;—no wonder you feel bad. Poor little thing! you shall have something good directly.

And away she bustled to get it. Left alone, Ellen's tears flowed a few minutes very fast. She felt forlorn; and she was besides, as Mrs. Forbes opined, both tired and faint. But she did not wish to be found weeping; she checked her tears, and was sitting again quietly before the fire when the landlady returned.

Mrs. Forbes had a great bowl of milk in one hand, and a plate of bread in the other, which she placed on the kitchen table, and setting a chair, called Ellen to come and partake of it.

"Come, dear,—here is something that will do you good. I thought there was a piece of pie in the buttery, and so there was, but Mr. Forbes must have got hold of it, for it aint there now; and there aint a bit of cake in the house for you; but I thought maybe you would like this as well as anything. Come!"

Ellen thanked her, but said she did not want anything.

"Oh yes, you do," said Mrs. Forbes, "I know better. You're as pale as I don't know what. Come! this 'll put roses in your cheeks. Don't you like bread and milk?"

"Yes, very much indeed, ma'am," said Ellen, "but I'm not hungry." She rose, however, and came to the table.

"O well, try to eat a bit just to please me. It's real good country milk—not a bit of cream off. You don't get such milk as that in the city, I guess. That's right!—I see the roses coming back to your cheeks already."

"Is your pa in New York now?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You expect your pa and ma up to Thirlwall by-and-by, don't you?"

"No, ma'am."

Mrs. Forbes was surprised, and longed to ask why not, and what Ellen had come for; but the shade that had passed over her face as she answered the last question warned the landlady she was getting upon dangerous ground.

"Does your aunt expect you to-night?"

"I believe so, ma'am,—I don't know,—she was to have met me; papa said he would write."

"O, well! maybe something hindered her from coming. It's no matter; you'll get home just as well. Mr. Van Brunt will be here soon, I guess; it's most time for him to be along."

She went to the front door to look out for him, but returned without any news. A few minutes passed in silence, for though full of curiosity, the good landlady dared not ask what she wanted to know, for fear of again exciting the sorrow of her little companion. She contented herself with looking at Ellen, who on her part, much rested and refreshed, had turned from the table and was again, though somewhat less sadly, gazing into the fire.

Presently the great wooden clock struck half-past five, with a whirring ricketty voice, for all the world like a hoarse grasshopper. Ellen at first wondered where it came from, and was looking at the clumsy machine that reached nearly from the floor of the kitchen to the ceiling, when a door at the other end of the room opened, and "Good day, Mrs. Forbes," in a rough but not unpleasant voice, brought her head quickly round in that direction. There stood a large strong-built man, with an ox-whip in his hand. He was well-made and rather handsome, but there was something of heaviness in the air of both face and person mixed with his certainly good humored expression. His dress was as rough as his voice—a coarse gray frock-coat, green velveteen pantaloons, and a fur cap that had seen its best days some time ago.

"Good day, Mrs. Forbes," said this personage; "Sam said you wanted me to stop as I went along."

"Ah, how d'ye do, Mr. Van Brunt?" said the landlady, rising;—"you've got the ox-cart here with you, ha'n't you?"

"Yes,—I've got the ox-cart," said the person addressed,—"I came in town for a barrel of flour; and then the near ox had lost both his fore shoes off, and I had to go over there; and Hammersley has kept me a precious long time. What's wanting, Mrs. Forbes? I can't stop."

"You've no load in the cart, have you?" said the landlady.

"No; I should have had though, but Miller had no shorts nor fresh flour, nor won't till next week. What's to go down, Mrs. Forbes?

"The nicest load ever you carried, Mr. Van Brunt. Here's a little lady come to stay with Miss Fortune. She's a daughter of Captain Montgomery, Miss Fortune's brother, you know. She came by the stage a little while ago, and the thing is how to get her down to-night. She can go in the cart, can't she?"

Mr. Van Brunt looked a little doubtful, and pulling off his cap with one hand, while he scratched his head with the other, he examined Ellen from head to foot; much as if she had been some great bale of goods, and he were considering whether his cart would hold her or not.

"Well," said he at length,—"I don't know but she can; but there aint nothing on 'arth for her to sit down upon."

"O, never mind; I'll fix that," said Mrs. Forbes. "Is there any straw in the bottom of the cart?"

"Not a bit."

"Well, I'll fix it," said Mrs. Forbes. "You get her trunk into the cart, will you, Mr. Van Brunt? and I'll see to the rest."

Mr. Van Brunt moved off without another word to do what was desired of him,—apparently quite confounded at having a passenger instead of his more wonted load of bags and barrels. And his face still continued to wear the singular doubtful expression it had put on at first hearing the news. Ellen's trunk was quickly hoisted in, however; and Mrs. Forbes presently appeared with a little arm-chair, which Mr. Van Brunt with an approving look bestowed in the cart, planting it with it's back against the trunk to keep it steady. Mrs. Forbes then raising herself on tiptoe by the side of the cart, took a view of the arrangements.

"That won't do yet," said she; "her feet will be cold on that bare floor, and 'taint over clean neither. Here, Sally! run up and fetch me that piece of carpet you'll find lying at the top of the back stairs. Now, hurry!—Now, Mr. Van Brunt, I depend upon you to get my things back again; will you see and bring 'em the first time you come in town?"

"I'll see about it. But what if I can't get hold of them?" answered the person addressed, with a half smile.

"O," said Mrs. Forbes, with another, "I leave that to you; you have your ways and means. Now, just spread this carpet down nicely under her chair; and then she'll be fixed. Now, my darling, you'll ride like a queen. But how are you going to get in! Will you let Mr. Van Brunt lift you up?"

Ellen's "O no, ma'am, if you please!" was accompanied with such an evident shrinking from the proposal, that Mrs. Forbes did not press it. A chair was brought from the kitchen, and by making a long step from it to the top of the wheel, and then to the edge of the cart, Ellen was at length safely stowed in her place. Kind Mrs. Forbes then stretched herself up over the side of the cart to shake hands with her and bid her good bye, telling her again she would ride like a queen. Ellen answered only "Good-bye, ma'am;" but it was said with a look of so much sweetness, and eyes swimming half in sadness and half in gratefulness, that the good landlady could not forget it.

"I do think," said she, when she went back to her husband, "that is the dearest little thing, about, I ever did see."

"Humph!" said her husband, "I reckon Miss Fortune will think so too."

The doubtful look came back to Mrs. Forbes' face, and with another little grave shake of her head, she went into the kitchen.

"How kind she is! how good everybody is to me," thought little Ellen, as she moved off in state in her chariot drawn by oxen. Quite a contrast this new way of traveling was to the noisy stage and swift steamer. Ellen did not know at first whether to like or dislike it; but she came to the conclusion that it was very funny, and a remarkably amusing way of getting along. There was one disadvantage about it certainly,—their rate of travel was very slow. Ellen wondered her charioteer did not make his animals go faster; but she soon forgot their lazy progress in the interest of novel sights and new scenes.

Slowly, very slowly, the good oxen drew the cart and the little queen in the arm-chair out of the town, and they entered upon the open country. The sun had already gone down when they left the inn, and the glow of his setting had faded a good deal by the time they got quite out of the town; but light enough was left still to delight Ellen with the plea-

sant look of the country. It was a lovely evening, and quiet as summer; not a breath stirring. The leaves were all off the trees; the hills were brown; but the soft warm light that still lingered upon them forbade any look of harshness or dreariness. These hills lay towards the west, and at Thirlwall were not more than two miles distant, but sloping off more to the west as the range extended in a southerly direction. Between, the ground was beautifully broken. Rich fields and meadows lay on all sides, sometimes level, and sometimes with a soft wavy surface, where Ellen thought it must be charming to run up and down. Every now and then these were varied by a little rising ground capped with a piece of woodland; and beautiful trees, many of them, were seen standing alone, especially by the road-side. All had a cheerful, pleasant look. The houses were very scattered; in the whole way they passed but few. Ellen's heart regularly began to beat when they came in sight of one, and "I wonder if that is aunt Fortune's house!"—"perhaps it is!"—or, "I hope it is not!" were the thoughts that rose in her mind. But slowly the oxen brought her abreast of the houses, one after another, and slowly they passed on beyond, and there was no sign of getting home yet. Their way was through pleasant lanes towards the south, but constantly approaching the hills. About half a mile from Thirlwall, they crossed a little river, not more than thirty yards broad, and after that the twilight deepened fast. The shades gathered on field and hill: everything grew brown, and then dusky; and then Ellen was obliged to content herself with what was very near, for further than that she could only see dim outlines. She began again to think of their slow traveling, and to wonder that Mr. Van Brunt could be content with it. She wondered too what made him walk, when he might just as well have sat in the cart; the truth was he had chosen that for the very purpose that he might have a good look at the little queen in the arm-chair. Apparently, however, he too now thought it might be as well to make a little haste, for he thundered out some orders to his oxen, accompanied with two or three strokes of his heavy lash, which, though not cruel by any means, went to Ellen's heart.

"Them lazy critters won't go fast anyhow," said he to

Ellen,—"they will take their own time; it aint no use to cut them."

"O no! pray don't, if you please!" said Ellen, in a voice of earnest entreaty.

"'Taint fair neither," continued Mr. Van Brunt, lashing his great whip from side to side without touching anything. "I have seen critters that would take any quantity of whipping to make them go, but them 'ere aint of that kind; they'll work as long as they can stand, poor fellows!"

There was a little silence, during which Ellen eyed her rough charioteer, not knowing exactly what to make of him.

"I guess this is the first time you ever rid in an ox-cart, aint it?"

"Yes," said Ellen; "I never saw one before."

"Ha'n't you never seen an ox-cart! Well—how do you like it?"

"I like it very much indeed. Have we much farther to go before we get to aunt Fortune's house?"

"'Aunt Fortune's house?' a pretty good bit yet. You see that mountain over there?"—pointing with his whip to a hill directly west of them, and about a mile distant.

"Yes," said Ellen.

"That's the Nose. Then you see that other?"—pointing to one that lay some two miles further south;—"Miss Fortune's house is just this side of that; it's all of two miles from here."

And urged by this recollection, he again scolded and cheered the patient oxen, who for the most part kept on their steady way without any reminder. But perhaps it was for Ellen's sake that he scarcely touched them with the whip.

"That don't hurt them, not a bit," he remarked to Ellen,—"it only lets them know that I'm here, and they must mind their business. So you're Miss Fortune's niece, eh?"

"Yes," said Ellen.

"Well," said Mr. Van Brunt, with a desperate attempt at being complimentary, "I shouldn't care if you was mine too."

Ellen was somewhat astounded, and so utterly unable to echo the wish, that she said nothing. She did not know it, but Mr. Van Brunt had made, for him, most extraordinary

efforts at sociability. Having quite exhausted himself, he now mounted into the cart and sat silent, only now and then uttering energetic "Gee's!" and "Haw's!" which greatly excited Ellen's wonderment. She discovered they were meant for the ears of the oxen, but more than that she could not make out.

They plodded along very slowly, and the evening fell fast. As they left behind the hill which Mr. Van Brunt had called "the Nose," they could see, through an opening in the mountains, a bit of the western horizon, and some brightness still lingering there; but it was soon hid from view, and darkness veiled the whole country. Ellen could amuse herself no longer with looking about; she could see nothing very clearly but the outline of Mr. Van Brunt's broad back, just before her. But the stars had come out!—and, brilliant and clear, they were looking down upon her with their thousand eyes. Ellen's heart jumped when she saw them, with a mixed feeling of pleasure and sadness. They carried her right back to the last evening, when she was walking up the hill with Timmins; she remembered her anger against Mrs. Dunscombe, and her kind friend's warning not to indulge it, and all his teaching that day; and tears came with the thought, how glad she should be to hear him speak to her again. Still looking up at the beautiful quiet stars, she thought of her dear far-off mother,—how long it was already since she had seen her;—faster and faster the tears dropped;—and then she thought of that glorious One who had made the stars, and was above them all, and who could and did see her mother and her, though ever so far apart, and could hear and bless them both. The little face was no longer upturned—it was buried in her hands, and bowed to her lap, and tears streamed as she prayed that God would bless her dear mother and take care of her. Not once nor twice;—the fullness of Ellen's heart could not be poured out in one asking. Greatly comforted at last, at having as it were laid over the care of her mother upon One who was able, she thought of herself, and her late resolution to serve him. She was in the same mind still. She could not call herself a Christian yet, but she was resolved to be one; and she earnestly asked the Saviour she sought, to make her and keep her his child. And then Ellen felt happy.

Quiet, and weariness, and even drowsiness succeeded. It

was well the night was still, for it had grown quite cool, and a breeze would have gone through and through Ellen's nankeen coat. As it was she began to be chilly, when Mr. Van Brunt, who since he got into the cart had made no remarks except to his oxen, turned round a little and spoke to her again.

"It's only a little bit of way we've got to go now," said he; "we're turning the corner."

The words seemed to shoot through Ellen's heart. She was wide awake instantly, and quite warm; and leaning forward in her little chair, she strove to pierce the darkness on either hand of her, to see whereabouts the house stood, and how things looked. She could discern nothing but misty shadows, and outlines of she could not tell what; the starlight was too dim to reveal anything to a stranger.

"There's the house," said Mr. Van Brunt, after a few minutes more,—"do you see it yonder?"

Ellen strained her eyes, but could make out nothing,—not even a glimpse of white. She sat back in her chair, her heart beating violently. Presently Mr. Van Brunt jumped down and opened a gate at the side of the road; and with a great deal of "gee"-ing the oxen turned to the right, and drew the cart a little way up hill,—then stopped on what seemed level ground.

"Here we are!" cried Mr. Van Brunt, as he threw his whip on the ground,—"and late enough! You must be tired of that little arm-cheer by this time. Come to the side of the cart and I'll lift you down."

Poor Ellen! There was no help for it. She came to the side of the cart, and taking her in his arms her rough charioteer set her very gently and carefully on the ground.

"There!" said he, "now you can run right in; do you see that little gate?"

"No," said Ellen, "I can't see anything,"

"Well, come here," said he, "and I'll show you. Here—you're running agin the fence—this way!"

And he opened a little wicket, which Ellen managed to stumble through.

"Now," said he, "go straight up to that door yonder, and open it, and you'll see where to go. Don't knock, but just pull the latch and go in."

And he went off to his oxen. Ellen at first saw no door, and did not even know where to look for it; by degrees, as her head became clearer, the large dark shadow of the house stood before her, and a little glimmering line of a path seemed to lead onward from where she stood. With unsteady steps, Ellen pursued it till her foot struck against the stone before the door. Her trembling fingers found the latch—lifted it—and she entered. All was dark there; but at the right a window showed light glimmering within. Ellen made toward it, and groping, came to another door-latch. This was big and clumsy; however, she managed it, and pushing open the heavy door, went in.

It was a good-sized, cheerful-looking kitchen. A fine fire was burning in the enormous fireplace; the white walls and ceiling were yellow in the light of the flame. No candles were needed, and none were there. The supper table was set, and with its snow-white tablecloth and shining furniture, looked very comfortable indeed. But the only person there was an old woman, sitting by the side of the fire, with her back towards Ellen. She seemed to be knitting, but did not move nor look round. Ellen had come a step or two into the room, and there she stood, unable to speak or to go any farther. "Can that be aunt Fortune?" she thought; "she can't be as old as that?"

In another minute a door opened at her right, just behind the old woman's back, and a second figure appeared at the top of a flight of stairs which led down from the kitchen. She came in, shutting the door behind her with her foot; and indeed both hands were full, one holding a lamp and a knife, and the other a plate of butter. The sight of Ellen stopped her short.

"What is this?—and what do you leave the door open for, child?" she said.

She advanced towards it, plate and lamp in hand, and setting her back against the door, shut it vigorously.

"Who are you?—and what's wanting?"

"I am Ellen Montgomery, ma'am," said Ellen, timidly.

"*What?*" said the lady, with some emphasis.

"Didn't you expect me, ma'am?" said Ellen; "papa said he would write."

"Why, is this Ellen Montgomery?" said Miss Fortune, apparently forced to the conclusion that it must be.

"Yes, ma'am," said Ellen.

Miss Fortune went to the table and put the butter and the lamp in their places.

"Did you say your father wrote to tell me of your coming?"

"He said he would, ma'am," said Ellen.

"He didn't! Never sent me a line. Just like him! I never yet knew Morgan Montgomery do a thing when he promised he would."

Ellen's face flushed, and her heart swelled. She stood motionless.

"How did you get down here to-night?"

"I came in Mr. Van Brunt's ox-cart," said Ellen.

"Mr. Van Brunt's ox-cart! Then he's got home, has he?" And hearing at this instant a noise outside, Miss Fortune swept to the door, saying, as she opened it, "Sit down, child, and take off your things."

The first command, at least, Ellen obeyed gladly; she did not feel enough at home to comply with the second. She only took off her bonnet.

"Well, Mr. Van Brunt," said Miss Fortune at the door, "have you brought me a barrel of flour?"

"No, Miss Fortune," said the voice of Ellen's charioteer, "I've brought you something better than that."

"Where did you find her?" said Miss Fortune, something shortly.

"Up at Forbes's."

"What have you got there?"

"A trunk. Where is it to go?"

"A trunk! Bless me! it must go up stairs; but how it is ever to get there, I am sure I don't know."

"I'll find a way to get it there, I'll engage, if you'll be so good as to open the door for me, ma'am."

"Indeed you won't! That'll never do. With your shoes!" said Miss Fortune, in a tone of indignant housewifery.

"Well—without my shoes, then," said Mr. Van Brunt, with a half giggle, as Ellen heard the shoes kicked off. "Now, ma'am, out of my way! give me a road."

Miss Fortune seized the lamp, and opening another door, ushered Mr. Van Brunt and the trunk out of the kitchen, and up, Ellen saw not whither. In a minute or two they returned, and he of the ox-cart went out.

"Supper's just ready, Mr. Van Brunt," said the mistress of the house."

"Can't stay, ma'am;—it's so late; must hurry home." And he closed the door behind him.

"What made you so late?" asked Miss Fortune of Ellen.

"I don't know, ma'am—I believe Mr. Van Brunt said the blacksmith had kept him."

Miss Fortune bustled about a few minutes in silence, setting some things on the table and filling the tea-pot.

"Come," she said to Ellen, "take off your coat and come to the table. You must be hungry by this time. It's a good while since you had your dinner, aint it? Come, mother."

The old lady rose, and Miss Fortune, taking her chair, set it by the side of the table next the fire. Ellen was opposite to her, and now for the first time, the old lady seemed to know that she was in the room. She looked at her very attentively, but with an expressionless gaze which Ellen did not like to meet, though otherwise her face was calm and pleasant.

"Who is that?" inquired the old lady presently of Miss Fortune, in a half whisper.

"That's Morgan's daughter," was the answer.

"Morgan's daughter! Has Morgan a daughter?"

"Why, yes, mother; don't you remember I told you a month ago he was going to send her here?"

The old lady turned again with a half shake of her head towards Ellen. "Morgan's daughter," she repeated to herself softly, "she's a pretty little girl,—very pretty. Will you come round here and give me a kiss, dear?"

Ellen submitted. The old lady folded her in her arms and kissed her affectionately. "That's your grandmother, Ellen," said Miss Fortune, as Ellen went back to her seat.

Ellen had no words to answer. Her aunt saw her weary, down look, and soon after supper proposed to take her up stairs. Ellen gladly followed her. Miss Fortune showed her to her room, and first asking if she wanted anything, left her to herself. It was a relief. Ellen's heart had been brim-

full and ready to run over for some time, but the tears could not come then. They did not now, till she had undressed and laid her weary little body on the bed; then they broke forth in an agony. "She did not kiss me! she didn't say she was glad to see me!" thought poor Ellen. But weariness this time was too much for sorrow and disappointment. It was but a few minutes, and Ellen's brow was calm again, and her eyelids still, and with the tears wet upon her cheeks, she was fast asleep.

CHAPTER X.

Nimble mischance, that com'st so swift of foot!

—Shakspeare.

The morning sun was shining full and strong in Ellen's eyes when she awoke. Bewildered at the strangeness of everything round her, she raised herself on her elbow, and took a long look at her new home. It could not help but seem cheerful. The bright beams of sunlight streaming in through the windows lighted on the wall and the old wainscoting; and paintless and rough as they were, nature's own gilding more than made amends for their want of comeliness. Still Ellen was not much pleased with the result of her survey. The room was good-sized, and perfectly neat and clean; it had two large windows opening to the east, through which, morning by morning, the sun looked in,—that was another blessing. But the floor was without a sign of a carpet; and the bare boards looked to Ellen very comfortless. The hard-finished walls were not very smooth, nor particularly white. The doors and wood work, though very neat, and even carved with some attempt at ornament, had never known the touch of paint, and had grown in the course of years to be of a light brown color. The room was very bare of furniture too. A dressing-table, pier-table or what-not, stood between the windows, but it was only a half-circular top of pine board set upon three very long bare-looking legs—altogether of a most awkward and unhappy appearance, Ellen thought, and quite too high for her to use with any comfort. No glass hung over it, nor anywhere else. On the north side of the room was a fire-place; against the opposite wall stood Ellen's trunk and two chairs;—that was all, except the cot bed she was lying on, and which had its place opposite the windows. The coverlid of that came in for a share of her

displeasure, being of home-made white and blue worsted mixed with cotton, exceeding thick and heavy.

"I wonder what sort of a blanket is under it," said Ellen, "if I can ever get it off to see!—pretty good; but the sheets are cotton, and so is the pillow-case!"

She was still leaning on her elbow, looking around her with a rather discontented face, when some door being opened down stairs a great noise of hissing and sputtering came to her ears, and presently after there stole to her nostrils a steaming odor of something very savory from the kitchen. It said as plainly as any dressing-bell that she had better get up. So up she jumped, and set about the business of dressing with great alacrity. Where was the distress of last night? Gone—with the darkness. She had slept well; the bracing atmosphere had restored strength and spirits; and the bright morning light made it impossible to be dull or down-hearted, in spite of the new cause she thought she had found. She went on quick with the business of the toilet. But when it came to the washing, she suddenly discovered that there were no conveniences for it in her room—no sign of pitcher or basin or stand to hold them. Ellen was slightly dismayed; but presently recollected her arrival had not been looked for so soon, and probably the preparations for it had not been completed. So she finished dressing, and then set out to find her way to the kitchen. On opening the door, there was a little landing-place from which the stairs descended just in front of her, and at the left hand another door, which she supposed must lead to her aunt's room. At the foot of the stairs Ellen found herself in a large square room or hall, for one of its doors, on the east, opened to the outer air, and was in fact the front door of the house. Another Ellen tried on the south side; it would not open. A third, under the stairs, admitted her to the kitchen.

The noise of hissing and sputtering now became quite violent, and the smell of the cooking, to Ellen's fancy, rather too strong to be pleasant. Before a good fire stood Miss Fortune, holding the end of a very long iron handle by which she was kept in communication with a flat vessel sitting on the fire, in which Ellen soon discovered all this noisy and odorous cooking was going on. A tall tin coffee-pot stood

on some coals in the corner of the fire-place, and another little iron vessel in front also claimed a share of Miss Fortune's attention, for she every now and then leaned forward to give a stir to whatever was in it, making each time quite a spasmodic effort to do so without quitting her hold of the end of the long handle. Ellen drew near and looked on with great curiosity, and not a little appetite; but Miss Fortune was far too busy to give her more than a passing glance. At length the hissing pan was brought to the hearth for some new arrangement of its contents, and Ellen seized the moment of peace and quiet to say, "Good morning, aunt Fortune."

Miss Fortune was crouching by the pan turning her slices of pork. "How do you do this morning?" she answered, without looking up.

Ellen replied she felt a great deal better.

"Slept warm, did you?" said Miss Fortune, as she set the pan back on the fire. And Ellen could hardly answer "Quite warm, ma'am," when the hissing and sputtering began again as loud as ever.

"I must wait," thought Ellen, "till this is over before I say what I want to. I can't scream out to ask for a basin and towel."

In a few minutes the pan was removed from the fire, and Miss Fortune went on to take out the brown slices of nicely-fried pork and arrange them in a deep dish, leaving a small quantity of clear fat in the pan. Ellen, who was greatly interested, and observing every step most attentively, settled in her own mind that certainly this would be thrown away, being fit for nothing but the pigs. But Miss Fortune didn't think so, for she darted into some pantry close by, and returning with a cup of cream in her hand emptied it all into the pork fat. Then she ran into the pantry again for a little round tin box, with a cover full of holes, and shaking this gently over the pan, a fine white shower of flour fell upon the cream. The pan was then replaced on the fire and stirred; and to Ellen's astonishment the whole changed, as if by magic, to a thick, stiff, white froth. It was not till Miss Fortune was carefully pouring this over the fried slices in the dish, that Ellen suddenly recollected that breakfast was ready, and she was not.

"Aunt Fortune," she said timidly, "I haven't washed yet,—there's no basin in my room."

Miss Fortune made no answer nor gave any sign of hearing; she went on dishing up breakfast. Ellen waited a few minutes.

"Will you please, ma'am, to show me where I can wash myself."

"Yes," said Miss Fortune, suddenly standing erect, "you'll have to go down to the spout."

"The spout, ma'am," said Ellen,—"what's that?

"You'll know it when you see it, I guess," answered her aunt, again stooping over her preparations. But in another moment she arose and said, "Just open that door there behind you, and go down the stairs and out at the door, and you'll see where it is, and what it is too."

Ellen still lingered. "Would you be so good as to give me a towel, ma'am?" she said timidly.

Miss Fortune dashed past her and out of another door, whence she presently returned with a clean towel which she threw over Ellen's arm, and then went back to her work.

Opening the door by which she had first seen her aunt enter the night before, Ellen went down a steep flight of steps, and found herself in a lower kitchen, intended for common purposes. It seemed to be not used at all, at least there was no fire there, and a cellar-like feeling and smell instead. That was no wonder, for beyond the fire-place on the left hand was the opening to the cellar, which running under the other part of the house, was on a level with this kitchen. It had no furniture but a table and two chairs. The thick heavy door stood open. Passing out, Ellen looked around her for water,—in what shape or form it was to present itself she had no very clear idea. She soon spied, a few yards distant a little stream of water pouring from the end of a pipe or trough raised about a foot and a half from the ground, and a well worn path leading to it, left no doubt of its being 'the spout.' But when she had reached it Ellen was in no small puzzle as to how she should manage. The water was clear and bright, and poured very fast into a shallow wooden trough underneath, whence it ran off into the meadow and disappeared.

"But what shall I do without a basin," thought Ellen, "I can't catch any water in my hands, it runs too fast. If I only could get my face under there—that would be fine!"

Very carefully and cautiously she tried it, but the continual spattering of the water had made the board on which she stood so slippery that before her face could reach the stream she came very near tumbling headlong, and so taking more of a cold bath than she wished for. So she contented herself with the drops her hands could bring to her face,—a scanty supply; but those drops were deliciously cold and fresh. And afterwards she pleased herself with holding her hands in the running water, till they were red with the cold. On the whole Ellen enjoyed her washing very much. The morning air came playing about her; its cool breath was on her cheek with health in its touch. The early sun was shining on tree and meadow and hill; the long shadows stretched over the grass, and the very brown out-houses, looked bright. She thought it was the loveliest place she ever had seen. And that sparkling trickling water was certainly the purest and sweetest she had ever tasted. Where could it come from? It poured from a small trough, made of the split trunk of a tree with a little groove or channel two inches wide hollowed out in it. But at the end of one of these troughs, another lapped on, and another at the end of that, and how many there were Ellen could not see, nor where the beginning of them was. Ellen stood gazing and wondering, drinking in the fresh air, hope and spirits rising every minute, when she suddenly recollected breakfast! She hurried in. As she expected, her aunt was at the table; but to her surprise, and not at all to her gratification, there was Mr. Van Brunt at the other end of it, eating away, very much at home indeed. In silent dismay Ellen drew her chair to the side of the table.

"Did you find the spout?" asked Miss Fortune.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, how do you like it?"

"O, I like it very much indeed," said Ellen. "I think it is beautiful."

Miss Fortune's face rather softened at this, and she gave Ellen an abundant supply of all that was on the table. Her journey, the bracing air, and her cool morning wash,

altogether, had made Ellen very sharp, and she did justice to the breakfast. She thought never was coffee so good as this country coffee; nor anything so excellent as the brown bread and butter, both as sweet as bread and butter could be; neither was any cookery ever so entirely satisfactory as Miss Fortune's fried pork and potatoes. Yet her teaspoon was not silver; her knife could not boast of being either sharp or bright; and her fork was certainly made for anything else in the world but comfort and convenience, being of only two prongs, and those so far apart that Ellen had no small difficulty to carry the potato safely from her plate to her mouth. It mattered nothing; she was now looking on the bright side of things, and all this only made her breakfast taste the sweeter.

Ellen rose from the table when she had finished, and stood a few minutes thoughtfully by the fire.

"Aunt Fortune," she said at length timidly, "if you've no objection, I should like to go and take a good look all about."

"O yes," said Miss Fortune, "go where you like; I'll give you a week to do what you please with yourself."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Ellen, as she ran off for her bonnet; "a week's a long time. I suppose," thought she, "I shall go to school at the end of that."

Returning quickly with her white bonnet, Ellen opened the heavy kitchen door by which she had entered last night, and went out. She found herself in a kind of long shed. It had very rough walls and floor, and overhead showed the brown beams and rafters; two little windows and a door were on the side. All manner of rubbish lay there, especially at the farther end. There were scattered about and piled up various boxes, boards, farming and garden tools, old pieces of rope and sheepskin, old iron, a cheese press, and what not. Ellen did not stay long to look, but went out to find something pleasanter. A few yards from the shed door was the little gate through which she had stumbled in the dark, and outside of that Ellen stood still awhile. It was a fair, pleasant day, and the country scene she looked upon was very pretty. Ellen thought so. Before her, at a little distance, rose the great gable end of the barn, and a long row of outhouses stretched away from it towards the left. The ground

was strewn thick with chips; and the reason was not hard to find, for a little way off, under an old stunted apple tree, lay a huge log, well chipped on the upper surface, with the axe resting against it; and close by were some sticks of wood both chopped and unchopped. To the right, the ground descended gently to a beautiful plane meadow, skirted on the hither side with a row of fine apple trees. The smooth green flat tempted Ellen to a run, but first she looked to the left. There was the garden, she guessed, for there was a paling fence which enclosed a pretty large piece of ground; and between the garden and the house a green slope ran down to the spout. That reminded her that she had intended making a journey of discovery up the course of the long trough. No time could be better than now, and she ran down the slope.

The trough was supported at some height from the ground by little heaps of stones placed here and there along its whole course. Not far from the spout it crossed a fence. Ellen must cross it too to gain her object, and how that could be done was a great question; she resolved to try, however. But first she played awhile with the water, which had great charms for her. She dammed up the little channel with her fingers, forcing the water to flow over the side of the trough;—there was something very pleasant in stopping the supply of the spout, and seeing the water trickling over where it had no business to go; and she did not heed that some of the drops took her frock in their way. She stooped her lips to the trough and drank of its sweet current,—only for fun's sake, for she was not thirsty. Finally, she set out to follow the stream up to its head. But poor Ellen had not gone more than half way towards the fence, when she all at once plunged into the mire. The green grass growing there had looked fair enough, but there was running water and black mud under the green grass, she found to her sorrow. Her shoes, her stockings, were full. What was to be done, now? The journey of discovery must be given up. She forgot to think about where the water came from, in the more pressing question, "What will aunt Fortune say?"—and the quick wish came that she had her mother to go to. However, she got out of the slough, and wiping her shoes as well as she could on the grass, she hastened back to the house.

The kitchen was all put in order, the hearth swept, the

irons at the fire, and Miss Fortune just pinning her ironing blanket on the table. "Well,—what's the matter?" she said, when she saw Ellen's face; but as her glance reached the floor, her brow darkened. "Mercy on me!" she exclaimed, with slow emphasis,—"what on earth have you been about? where have you been?"

Ellen explained.

"Well, you *have* made a figure of yourself! Sit down!" said her aunt, shortly, as she thrust a chair down on the hearth before the fire; "I should have thought you'd have had wit enough at your age to keep out of the ditch."

"I didn't see any ditch," said Ellen.

"No, I suppose not," said Miss Fortune, who was energetically twitching off Ellen's shoes and stockings with her fore finger and thumb; "I suppose not! you were staring up at the moon or stars, I suppose."

"It all looked green and smooth," said poor Ellen; "one part just like another; and the first thing I knew I was up to my ankles."

"What were you there at all for?" said Miss Fortune, shortly enough.

"I couldn't see where the water came from, and I wanted to find out."

"Well you've found out enough for one day I hope. Just look at those stockings! Ha'n't you got never a pair of colored stockings, that you must go poking into the mud with white ones?"

"No, ma'am."

"Do you mean to say you never wore any but white ones at home?"

"Yes, ma'am; I never had any others."

Miss Fortune's thoughts seemed too much for speech, from the way in which she jumped up and went off without saying anything more. She presently came back with an old pair of gray socks, which she bade Ellen put on as soon as her feet were dry.

"How many of those white stockings have you?" she said.

"Mamma bought me half a dozen pair of new ones just before I came away, and I had as many as that of old ones besides."

"Well now go up to your trunk and bring 'em all down to me—every pair of white stockings you have got. There's a pair of old slippers you can put on till your shoes are dry," she said, flinging them to her;—"they arn't much too big for you."

"They're not much too big for the *socks*—they're a great deal too big for me," thought Ellen. But she said nothing. She gathered all her stockings together and brought them down stairs, as her aunt had bidden her.

"Now you may run out to the barn, to Mr. Van Brunt, —you'll find him there,—and tell him I want him to bring me some white maple bark, when he comes home to dinner, —white maple bark, do you hear?"

Away went Ellen, but in a few minutes came back. "I can't get in," she said.

"What's the matter?"

"Those great doors are shut, and I can't open them. I knocked, but nobody came."

"Knock at a barn door!" said Miss Fortune. "You must go in at the little cowhouse door, at the left, and go round. He's in the lower barn-floor."

The barn stood lower than the level of the chip-yard, from which a little bridge led to the great door-way of the second floor. Passing down the range of outhouses, Ellen came to the little door her aunt had spoken of. "But what in the world should I do if there should be cows inside there?" said she to herself. She peeped in;—the cowhouse was perfectly empty; and cautiously, and with many a fearful glance to the right and left, lest some terrible horned animal should present itself, Ellen made her way across the cow-house, and through the barn-yard, littered thick with straw wet and dry, to the lower barn-floor. The door of this stood wide open. Ellen looked with wonder and pleasure when she got in. It was an immense room—the sides showed nothing but hay up to the ceiling, except here and there an enormous upright post; the floor was perfectly clean, only a few locks of hay and grains of wheat scattered upon it; and a pleasant sweet smell was there, Ellen could not tell of what. But no Mr. Van Brunt. She looked about for him, she dragged her disagreeable slippers back and forth over the floor, in vain.

"Hilloa! what's wanting?" at length cried a rough voice she remembered very well. But where was the speaker? On every side, to every corner, her eyes turned without finding him. She looked up at last. There was the round face of Mr. Van Brunt peering down at her through a large opening or trap-door, in the upper floor.

"Well!" said he, "have you come out here to help me thrash wheat!"

Ellen told him what she had come for.

"White maple bark,—well,"—said he, in his slow way, "I'll bring it. I wonder what's in the wind now."

So Ellen wondered, as she slowly went back to the house; and yet more, when her aunt set her to tacking her stockings together by two and two.

"What are you going to do with them, aunt Fortune?" she at last ventured to say.

"You'll see,—when the time comes."

"Mayn't I keep out one pair?" said Ellen, who had a vague notion that by some mysterious means her stockings were to be prevented from ever looking white any more.

"No;—just do as I tell you."

Mr. Van Brunt came at dinner-time with the white maple bark. It was thrown forthwith into a brass kettle of water which Miss Fortune had already hung over the fire. Ellen felt sure this had something to do with her stockings, but she could ask no questions; and as soon as dinner was over she went up to her room. It didn't look pleasant now. The brown wood-work and rough dingy walls had lost their gilding. The sunshine was out of it; and what was more, the sunshine was out of Ellen's heart too. She went to the window and opened it, but there was nothing to keep it open; it slid down again as soon as she let it go. Baffled and sad, she stood leaning her elbows on the window-sill, looking out on the grass-plat that lay before the door, and the little gate that opened on the lane, and the smooth meadow, and rich broken country beyond. It was a very fair and pleasant scene in the soft sunlight of the last of October; but the charm of it was gone for Ellen; it was dreary. She looked without caring to look, or knowing what she was looking at; she felt the tears rising to her eyes; and sick of the window, turned away. Her eye fell on her trunk; her next thought

was of her desk inside of it; and suddenly her heart sprang; —"I will write to mamma!" No sooner said than done. The trunk was quickly open, and hasty hands pulled out one thing after another till the desk was reached.

"But what shall I do?" thought she,—"there isn't a sign of a table. O what a place! I'll shut my trunk and put it on that. But here are all these things to put back first."

They were eagerly stowed away; and then kneeling by the side of the trunk, with loving hands Ellen opened her desk. A sheet of paper was drawn from her store, and properly placed before her; the pen dipped in the ink, and at first with a hurried, then with a trembling hand, she wrote, "My dear Mamma." But Ellen's heart had been swelling and swelling, with every letter of those three words, and scarcely was the last "a" finished, when the pen was dashed down, and flinging away from the desk, she threw herself on the floor in a passion of grief. It seemed as if she had her mother again in her arms, and was clinging with a death-grasp not to be parted from her. And then the feeling that she was parted!—As much bitter sorrow as a little heart can know was in poor Ellen's now. In her childish despair she wished she could die, and almost thought she should. After a time, however, though not a short time, she rose from the floor and went to her writing again; her heart a little eased by weeping, yet the tears kept coming all the time, and she could not quite keep her paper from being blotted. The first sheet was spoiled before she was aware; she took another.

"My Dearest Mamma,

"It makes me so glad and so sorry to write to you, that I don't know what to do. I want to see you so much, mamma, that it seems to me sometimes as if my heart would break. O, mamma, if I could just kiss you once more, I would give anything in the whole world. I can't be happy as long as you are away, and I am afraid I can't be good either; but I will try. O I will try, mamma. I have so much to say to you that I don't know where to begin. I am sure my paper will never hold it all. You will want to know about my journey. The first day was on the steamboat, you know. I should have had a dreadful time that day, mamma, but for something I'll tell you about. I was sitting up on the upper deck,

thinking about you, and feeling very badly indeed, when a gentleman came and spoke to me, and asked me what was the matter. Mamma, I can't tell you how kind he was to me. He kept me with him the whole day. He took me all over the boat, and showed me all about a great many things, and he talked to me a great deal. O, mamma, how he talked to me. He read in the Bible to me, and explained it, and he tried to make me be a Christian. And O, mamma, when he was talking to me, how I wanted to do as he said, and I resolved I would. I did, mamma, and I have not forgotten it. I will try indeed, but I am afraid it will be very hard without you or him, or anybody else to help me. You couldn't have been kinder yourself, mamma; he kissed me at night when I bid him good-bye, and I was very sorry indeed. I wish I could see him again. Mamma, I will always love that gentleman if I never see him again in the world. I wish there was somebody here that I could love, but there is not. You will want to know what sort of a person my aunt Fortune is. I think she is very good looking, or she would be if her nose was not quite so sharp: but, mamma, I can't tell you what sort of a feeling I have about her; it seems to me as if she was sharp all over. I am sure her eyes are as sharp as two needles. And she don't walk like other people; at least sometimes. She makes queer little jerks and starts and jumps, and flies about like I don't know what. I am afraid it is not right for me to write so about her; but may I not tell you, mamma? There's nobody else for me to talk to. I can't like aunt Fortune much yet, and I am sure she don't like me; but I will try to make her. I have not forgotten what you said to me about that. O, dear mamma, I will try to mind everything you ever said to me in your life. I am afraid you won't like what I have written about aunt Fortune; but indeed I have done nothing to displease her, and I will try not to. If you were only here, mamma, I should say it was the loveliest place I ever saw in my life. Perhaps, after all, I shall feel better, and be quite happy by-and-by; but O, mamma, how glad I shall be when I get a letter from you. I shall begin to look for it soon, and I think I shall go out of my wits with joy when it comes. I had the funniest ride down here from Thirlwall that you can think; how do you guess I came? In a cart drawn by oxen.

They went so slow we were an age getting here; but I liked it very much. There was a good-natured man driving the oxen, and he was kind to me; but, mamma, what do you think? he eats at the table. I know what you would tell me; you would say I must not mind trifles. Well, I will try not, mamma. O darling mother, I can't think much of anything but you. I think of you the whole time. Who makes tea for you now? Are you better? Are you going to leave New York soon? It seems dreadfully long since I saw you. I am tired, dear mamma, and cold; and it is getting dark. I must stop. I have a good big room to myself; that is a good thing. I should not like to sleep with aunt Fortune. Good night, dear mamma. I wish I could sleep with you once more. O, when will that be again, mamma? Good night. Good night.

"Your affectionate ELLEN."

The letter finished was carefully folded, enclosed, and directed; and then with an odd mixture of pleasure and sadness, Ellen lit one of her little wax matches, as she called them, and sealed it very nicely. She looked at it fondly a minute when all was done, thinking of the dear fingers that would hold and open it; her next movement was to sink her face in her hands, and pray most earnestly for a blessing upon her mother, and help for herself,—poor Ellen felt she needed it. She was afraid of lingering lest tea should be ready; so, locking up her letter, she went down stairs.

The tea was ready. Miss Fortune and Mr. Van Brunt were at the table, and so was the old lady, whom Ellen had not seen before that day. She quietly drew up her chair to its place.

"Well," said Miss Fortune, "I hope you feel better for your long stay up stairs."

"I do, ma'am," said Ellen; "a great deal better."

"What have you been about?"

"I have been writing, ma'am."

"Writing what?"

"I have been writing to mamma."

Perhaps Miss Fortune heard the trembling of Ellen's voice, or her sharp glance saw the lip quiver and eyelid droop. Something softened her. She spoke in a different tone;

asked Ellen if her tea was good; took care she had plenty of the bread and butter, and excellent cheese, which was on the table; and lastly cut her a large piece of the pumpkin pie. Mr. Van Brunt too looked once or twice at Ellen's face as if he thought all was not right there. He was not so sharp as Miss Fortune, but the swollen eyes and tear-stains were not quite lost upon him.

After tea, when Mr. Van Brunt was gone, and the tea-things cleared away, Ellen had the pleasure of finding out the mystery of the brass kettle and the white maple bark. The kettle now stood in the chimney corner. Miss Fortune, seating herself before it, threw in all Ellen's stockings except one pair, which she flung over to her, saying, "There—I don't care if you keep that one." Then, tucking up her sleeves to the elbows, she fished up pair after pair out of the kettle, and wringing them out hung them on chairs to dry. But, as Ellen had opined, they were no longer white, but of a fine slate color. She looked on in silence, too much vexed to ask questions.

"Well, how do you like that?" said Miss Fortune at length, when she had got two or three chairs round the fire pretty well hung with a display of slate-colored cotton legs.

"I don't like it at all," said Ellen.

"Well, *I* do. How many pair of white stockings would you like to drive into the mud and let me wash out every week?"

"*You* wash!" said Ellen, in surprise; "I didn't think of *your* doing it."

"Who did you think *was* going to do it? There's nothing in this house but goes through my hands, I can tell you, and so must you. I suppose you've lived all your life among people that thought a great deal of wetting their little finger; but I'm not one of 'em, I guess you'll find."

Ellen was convinced of that already.

"Well, what are you thinking of?" said Miss Fortune presently.

"I am thinking of my nice white darning-cotton," said Ellen. "I might just as well not have had it."

"Is it wound, or in the skein?"

"In the skein."

"Then just go right up and get it. I'll warrant I'll fix it so that you'll have a use for it."

Ellen obeyed, but musing rather uncomfortably what else there was of hers that Miss Fortune could lay hands on. She seemed in imagination to see all her white things turning brown. She resolved she would keep her trunk well locked up; but what if her keys should be called for?

She was dismissed to her room soon after the dyeing business was completed. It was rather a disagreeable surprise to find her bed still unmade; and she did not at all like the notion that the making of it in future must depend entirely upon herself; Ellen had no fancy for such handiwork. She went to sleep in somewhat the same dissatisfied mood with which the day had been begun;—displeasure at her coarse heavy coverlid and cotton sheets again taking its place among weightier matters;—and dreamed of tying them together into a rope by which to let herself down out of the window; but when she had got so far, Ellen's sleep became sound, and the end of the dream was never known.

CHAPTER XI.

Downward, and ever farther,
And ever the brook beside;
And ever fresher murmured,
And ever clearer, the tide.

LONGFELLOW. From the German.

CLOUDS and rain and cold winds kept Ellen within doors for several days. This did not better the state of matters between herself and her aunt. Shut up with her in the kitchen from morning till night, with the only variety of the old lady's company part of the time, Ellen thought neither of them improved upon acquaintance. Perhaps they thought the same of her; she was certainly not in her best mood. With nothing to do, the time hanging very heavy on her hands, disappointed, unhappy, frequently irritated, Ellen became at length very ready to take offence, and nowise disposed to pass it over or smooth it away. She seldom showed this in words, it is true, but it rankled in her mind. Listless and brooding, she sat day after day, comparing the present with the past, wishing vain wishes, indulging bootless regrets, and looking upon her aunt and grandmother with an eye of more settled aversion. The only other person she saw was Mr. Van Brunt, who came in regularly to meals; but he never said anything unless in answer to Miss Fortune's questions and remarks about the farm concerns. These did not interest her; and she was greatly wearied with the sameness of her life. She longed to go out again; but Thursday, and Friday, and Saturday, and Sunday passed, and the weather still kept her close prisoner. Monday brought a change, but though a cool, drying wind blew all day, the ground was too wet to venture out.

On the evening of that day, as Miss Fortune was setting the table for tea, and Ellen sitting before the fire, feeling

weary of everything, the kitchen door opened, and a girl somewhat larger and older than herself came in. She had a pitcher in her hand, and marching straight up to the tea-table, she said,

"Will you let granny have a little milk to-night, Miss Fortune? I can't find the cow. I'll bring it back to-morrow."

"You ha'n't lost her, Nancy?"

"Have, though," said the other; "she's been away these two days."

"Why didn't you go somewhere nearer for milk?"

"Oh! I don't know—I guess your'n is the sweetest," said the girl, with a look Ellen did not understand.

Miss Fortune took the pitcher and went into the pantry. While she was gone, the two children improved the time in looking very hard at each other. Ellen's gaze was modest enough, though it showed a great deal of interest in the new object; but the broad, searching stare of the other seemed intended to take in all there was of Ellen from her head to her feet, and keep it, and find out what sort of a creature she was at once. Ellen almost shrank from the bold black eyes, but they never wavered, till Miss Fortune's voice broke the spell.

"How's your grandmother, Nancy?"

"She's tolerable, ma'am, thank you."

"Now if you don't bring it back to-morrow, you won't get any more in a hurry," said Miss Fortune, as she handed the pitcher back to the girl.

"I'll mind it," said the latter, with a little nod of her head, which seemed to say there was no danger of her forgetting.

"Who is that, aunt Fortune?" said Ellen, when she was gone.

"She is a girl that lives up on the mountain yonder."

"But what's her name?"

"I had just as lief you wouldn't know her name. She aint a good girl. Don't you never have anything to do with her."

Ellen was in no mind to give credit to all her aunt's opinions, and she set this down as in part at least coming from ill-humor.

The next morning was calm and fine, and Ellen spent nearly the whole of it out of doors. She did not venture near

the ditch, but in every other direction she explored the ground, and examined what stood or grew upon it as thoroughly as she dared. Towards noon she was standing by the little gate at the back of the house, unwilling to go in, but not knowing what more to do, when Mr. Van Brunt came from the lane with a load of wood. Ellen watched the oxen toiling up the ascent, and thought it looked like very hard work; she was sorry for them.

"Isn't that a very heavy load?" she asked of their driver, as he was throwing it down under the apple tree.

"Heavy? Not a bit of it. It aint nothing at all to 'em. They'd take twice as much any day with pleasure."

"I shouldn't think so," said Ellen; "they don't look as if there was much pleasure about it. What makes them lean over so against each other when they are coming up hill?"

"Oh, that's just a way they've got. They're so fond of each other, I suppose. Perhaps they've something particular to say, and want to put their heads together for the purpose."

"No," said Ellen, half laughing, "it can't be that; they wouldn't take the very hardest time for that; they would wait till they got to the top of the hill; but there they stand just as if they were asleep, only their eyes are open. Poor things!"

"They're not very poor anyhow," said Mr. Van Brunt; "there aint a finer yoke of oxen to be seen than them are, nor in better condition."

He went on throwing the wood out of the cart, and Ellen stood looking at him.

"What'll you give me if I'll make you a scup one of these days?" said Mr. Van Brunt.

"A scup!" said Ellen.

"Yes—a scup! how would you like it?"

"I don't know what it is," said Ellen.

"A scup!—maybe you don't know it by that name; some folks call it a swing."

"A swing! O yes," said Ellen, "now I know. O, I like it very much."

"Would you like to have one?"

"Yes indeed I should, very much."

"Well, what'll you give me, if I'll fix you out?"

"I don't know," said Ellen, "I have nothing to give; I'll be very much obliged to you, indeed."

"Well now, come, I'll make a bargain with you: I'll engage to fix up a scup for you, if you'll give me a kiss."

Poor Ellen was struck dumb. The good-natured Dutchman had taken a fancy to the little pale-faced, sad-looking stranger, and really felt very kindly disposed toward her, but she neither knew, nor at the moment cared about that. She stood motionless, utterly astounded at his unheard-of proposal, and not a little indignant; but when, with a good-natured smile upon his round face, he came near to claim the kiss he no doubt thought himself sure of, Ellen shot from him like an arrow from a bow. She rushed to the house, and bursting open the door, stood with flushed face and sparkling eyes in the presence of her astonished aunt.

"What in the world is the matter?" exclaimed that lady.

"He wanted to kiss me!" said Ellen, scarce knowing whom she was talking to, and crimsoning more and more.

"Who wanted to kiss you?"

"That man out there."

"What man?"

"The man that drives the oxen."

"What, Mr. Van Brunt?" And Ellen never forgot the loud ha! ha! which burst from Miss Fortune's wide-open mouth.

"Well, why didn't you let him kiss you?"

The laugh, the look, the tone, stung Ellen to the very quick. In a fury of passion she dashed away out of the kitchen, and up to her own room. And there, for a while, the storm of anger drove over her with such violence that conscience had hardly time to whisper. Sorrow came in again as passion faded, and gentler but very bitter weeping took the place of convulsive sobs of rage and mortification, and then the whispers of conscience began to be heard a little. "O mamma! mamma!" cried poor Ellen in her heart, "how miserable I am without you! I never can like aunt Fortune—its of no use—I never can like her; I hope I sha'n't get to hate her!—and that isn't right. I am forgetting all that is good, and there's nobody to put me in mind. O mamma! if I could lay my head in your lap for a minute!" Then came thoughts of her Bible and hymn-book, and the

friend who had given it; sorrowful thoughts they were; and at last, humbled and sad, poor Ellen sought that great friend she knew she had displeased, and prayed earnestly to be made a good child; she felt and owned she was not one now.

It was long after mid-day when Ellen rose from her knees. Her passion was all gone; she felt more gentle and pleasant than she had done for days; but at the bottom of her heart resentment was not all gone. She still thought she had cause to be angry, and she could not think of her aunt's look and tone without a thrill of painful feeling. In a very different mood, however, from that in which she had flown up stairs two or three hours before, she now came softly down, and went out by the front door, to avoid meeting her aunt. She had visited that morning a little brook which ran through the meadow on the other side of the road. It had great charms for her; and now crossing the lane and creeping under the fence, she made her way again to its banks. At a particular spot, where the brook made one of its sudden turns, Ellen sat down upon the grass, and watched the dark water,—whirling, brawling over the stones, hurrying past her, with ever the same soft pleasant sound, and she was never tired of it. She did not hear footsteps drawing near, and it was not till some one was close beside her, and a voice spoke almost in her ears, that she raised her startled eyes and saw the little girl who had come the evening before for a pitcher of milk.

"What are you doing?" said the latter.

"I'm watching for fish," said Ellen.

"Watching for fish!" said the other, rather disdainfully.

"Yes," said Ellen,—"there, in that little quiet place they come sometimes; I've seen two."

"You can look for fish another time. Come now and take a walk with me."

"Where?" said Ellen.

"O, you shall see. Come! I'll take you all about and show you where people live; you ha'n't been anywhere yet, have you?"

"No," said Ellen,—"and I should like dearly to go, but"—

She hesitated. Her aunt's words came to mind, that this was not a good girl, and that she must have nothing to do with her; but she had not more than half believed them, and

she could not possibly bring herself now to go in and ask Miss Fortune's leave to take this walk. "I am sure," thought Ellen, "she would refuse me if there was no reason in the world." And then the delight of rambling through the beautiful country, and being for awhile in other company than that of her aunt Fortune and the old grandmother! The temptation was too great to be withstood.

"Well, what are you thinking about?" said the girl; "what's the matter? won't you come?"

"Yes," said Ellen, "I'm ready. Which way shall we go?"

With the assurance from the other that she would show her plenty of ways, they set off down the lane; Ellen with a secret fear of being seen and called back, till they had gone some distance, and the house was hid from view. Then her pleasure became great. The afternoon was fair and mild, the footing pleasant, and Ellen felt like a bird out of a cage. She was ready to be delighted with every trifle; her companion could not by any means understand or enter into her bursts of pleasure at many a little thing which she of the black eyes thought not worthy of notice. She tried to bring Ellen back to higher subjects of conversation.

"How long have you been here?" she asked.

"O, a good while," said Ellen,—"I don't know exactly; it's a week, I believe."

"Why do you call that a good while?" said the other.

"Well, it seems a good while to me," said Ellen, sighing; "it seems as long as four, I am sure."

"Then you don't like to live here much, do you?"

"I had rather be at home, of course."

"How do you like your aunt Fortune?"

"How do I like her?" said Ellen, hesitating,—"I think she's good-looking, and very smart."

"Yes, you needn't tell me she's smart,—everybody knows that; that aint what I ask you;—how do you *like* her?"

"How do I like her?" said Ellen, again; "how can I tell how I shall like her? I haven't lived with her but a week yet."

"You might just as well ha' spoke out," said the other, somewhat scornfully;—"do you think I don't know you half hate her already? and it'll be whole hating in another week

more. When I first heard you'd come, I guessed you'd have a sweet time with her."

"Why?" said Ellen,

"O don't ask me why," said the other, impatiently, "when you know as well as I do. Every soul that speaks of you says 'poor child!' and 'I'm glad I aint her.' You needn't try to come cunning over me. I shall be too much for you, I tell you."

"I don't know what you mean," said Ellen.

"O no, I suppose you don't," said the other, in the same tone,—"of course you don't; I suppose you don't know whether your tongue is your own or somebody's else. You think Miss Fortune is an angel, and so do I; to be sure she is!"

Not very well pleased with this kind of talk, Ellen walked on for a while in grave silence. Her companion meantime recollected herself; when she spoke again it was with an altered tone.

"How do you like Mr. Van Brunt?"

"I don't like him at all," said Ellen, reddening.

"Don't you!" said the other surprised,—"why everybody likes him. What don't you like him for?"

"I don't like him," repeated Ellen.

"Aint Miss Fortune queer to live in the way she does?"

"What way?" said Ellen.

"Why, without any help,—doing all her own work, and living all alone, when she's so rich as she is."

"Is she rich?" asked Ellen.

"Rich! I guess she is? she's one of the very best farms in the country, and money enough to have a dozen help, if she wanted 'em. Van Brunt takes care of the farm, you know?"

"Does he?" said Ellen.

"Why yes, of course he does; didn't you know that? what did you think he was at your house all the time for?"

"I am sure I don't know," said Ellen. "And are those aunt Fortune's oxen that he drives?"

"To be sure they are. Well, I do think you *are* green, to have been there all this time, and not found that out. Mr. Van Brunt does just what he pleases over the whole farm though; hires what help he wants, manages everything;

and then he has his share of all that comes off it. I tell you what—you'd better make friends with Van Brunt, for if anybody can help you when your aunt gets one of her ugly fits, it's him; she don't care to meddle with him much."

Leaving the lane, the two girls took a foot-path leading across the fields. The stranger was greatly amused here with Ellen's awkwardness in climbing fences. Where it was a possible thing, she was fain to crawl under; but once or twice that could not be done, and having with infinite difficulty mounted to the top rail, poor Ellen sat there in a most tottering condition, uncertain on which side of the fence she should tumble over, but seeing no other possible way of getting down. The more she trembled the more her companion laughed, standing aloof meanwhile, and insisting she should get down by herself. Necessity enabled her to do this at last, and each time the task became easier; but Ellen secretly made up her mind that her new friend was not likely to prove a very good one.

As they went along, she pointed out to Ellen two or three houses in the distance, and gave her not a little gossip about the people who lived in them; but all this Ellen scarcely heard, and cared nothing at all about. She had paused by the side of a large rock standing alone by the wayside, and was looking very closely at its surface.

"What is this curious brown stuff," said Ellen, "growing all over the rock?—like shrivelled and dried up leaves? Isn't it curious? part of it stands out like a leaf, and part of it sticks fast; I wonder if it grows here, or what it is."

"O never mind," said the other; "it always grows on the rocks everywhere; I don't know what it is, and what's more I don't care. 'Taint worth looking at. Come!"

Ellen followed her. But presently the path entered an open woodland, and now her delight broke forth beyond bounds.

"O, how pleasant this is! how lovely this is! Isn't it beautiful?" she exclaimed.

"Isn't *what* beautiful? I do think you are the queerest girl, Ellen."

"Why, everything," said Ellen, not minding the latter part of the sentence; "the ground is beautiful, and those tall trees, and that beautiful blue sky—only look at it."

"The ground is all covered with stones and rocks,—is that what you call beautiful? and the trees are as homely as they can be, with their great brown stems and no leaves. Come! —what *are* you staring at?"

Ellen's eyes were fixed on a string of dark spots which were rapidly passing overhead.

"Hark!" said she; "do you hear that noise? what is that? what is that?"

"It's only a flock of ducks," said the other, contemptuously; "come! do come!"

But Ellen was rooted to the ground, and her eyes followed the airy travellers till the last one had quitted the piece of blue sky which the surrounding woods left to be seen. And scarcely were these gone when a second flight came in view, following exactly in the track of the first.

"Where are they going?" said Ellen.

"I am sure I don't know where they are going; they never told me. I know where *I* am going; I should like to know whether you are going along with me."

Ellen, however, was in no hurry. The ducks had disappeared, but her eye had caught something else that charmed it.

"What is this?" said Ellen.

"Nothing but moss."

"Is that moss! How beautiful! how green and soft it is! I declare it's as soft as a carpet."

"As soft as a carpet!" repeated the other; "I should like to see a carpet as soft as that! *you* never did, I guess,"

"Indeed I have, though," said Ellen, who was gently jumping up and down on the green moss to try its softness, with a face of great satisfaction.

"I don't believe it a bit," said the other; "all the carpets I ever saw were as hard as a board, and harder; as soft as that, indeed!"

"Well," said Ellen, still jumping up and down, with bonnet off, and glowing cheek, and hair dancing about her face, "you may believe what you like; but I've seen a carpet as soft as this, and softer too; only one, though."

"What was it made of?"

"What other carpets are made of, I suppose. Come, I'll go with you now. I do think this is the loveliest place I ever did see. Are there any flowers here in the spring?"

"I don't know—yes, lots of 'em."

"Pretty ones?" said Ellen.

"*You'd* think so, I suppose; I never look at 'em."

"O, how lovely that will be!" said Ellen, clasping her hands; "how pleasant it must be to live in the country!"

"Pleasant, indeed!" said the other; "I think it's hateful. You'd think so, too, if you lived where I do. It makes me mad at granny every day because she won't go to Thirlwall. Wait till we get out of the wood, and I'll show you where I live. You can't see it from here."

Shocked a little at her companion's language, Ellen again walked on in sober silence. Gradually the ground became more broken, sinking rapidly from the side of the path, and rising again in a steep bank on the other side of a narrow dell; both sides were thickly wooded, but stripped of green, now, except where here and there a hemlock flung its graceful branches abroad and stood in lonely beauty among its leafless companions. Now the gurgling of waters was heard.

"Where is that?" said Ellen, stopping short.

"'Way down, down, at the bottom there. It's the brook."

"What brook? Not the same that goes by aunt Fortune's?"

"Yes, it's the very same. It's the crookedest thing you ever saw. It runs over there," said the speaker, pointing with her arm, "and then it takes a turn and goes that way, and then it comes round so, and then it shoots off in that way again and passes by your house; and after that the dear knows where it goes, for I don't. But I don't suppose it could run straight if it was to try to."

"Can't we get down to it?" asked Ellen.

"To be sure we can, unless you're as afraid of steep banks as you are of fences."

Very steep indeed it was, and strewn with loose stones; but Ellen did not falter here, and though once or twice in imminent danger of exchanging her cautious stepping for one long roll to the bottom, she got there safely on her two feet. When there, everything was forgotten in delight. It was a wild little place. The high, close sides of the dell left only a little strip of sky overhead; and at their feet ran the brook, much more noisy and lively here than where Ellen had before made its acquaintance; leaping from rock to rock, eddying

round large stones, and boiling over the small ones, and now and then pouring quietly over some great trunk of a tree that had fallen across its bed and dammed up the whole stream. Ellen could scarcely contain herself at the magnificence of many of the waterfalls, the beauty of the little quiet pools where the water lay still behind some large stone, and the variety of graceful tiny cascades.

"Look here, Nancy!" cried Ellen, "that's the Falls of Niagara—do you see?—that large one; O that is splendid! And this will do for Trenton Falls—what a fine foam it makes—isn't it a beauty?—and what shall we call this? I don't know what to call it; I wish we could name them all. But there's no end to them. O, just look at that one! that's too pretty not to have a name; what shall it be?"

"Black Falls," suggested the other.

"Black," said Ellen, dubiously, "why?—I don't like that."

"Why the water's all dark and black, don't you see?"

"Well," said Ellen, "let it be Black, then; but I don't like it. Now remember,—this is Niagara,—that is Black,—and this is Trenton,—and what is this?"

"If you are a-going to name them all," said Nancy, "we shan't get home to-night; you might as well name all the trees; there's a hundred of 'em, and more. I say, Ellen! suppos'n we follow the brook instead of climbing up yonder again; it will take us out to the open fields by-and-by."

"O do let's! said Ellen; "that will be lovely."

It proved a rough way; but Ellen still thought and called it "lovely." Often by the side of the stream there was no footing at all, and the girls picked their way over the stones, large and small, wet and dry, which strewed its bed; against which the water foamed and fumed and fretted, as if in great impatience. It was ticklish work getting along over these stones; now tottering on an unsteady one; now slipping on a wet one;—and every now and then making huge leaps from rock to rock, which there was no other method of reaching, at the imminent hazard of falling in. But they laughed at the danger; sprang on in great glee, delighted with the exercise and the fun; didn't stay long enough anywhere to lose their balance, and enjoyed themselves amazingly. There was many a hair-breadth escape; many an *almost* sousing; but

that made it all the more lively. The brook formed, as Nancy had said, a constant succession of little waterfalls, its course being quite steep and very rocky; and in some places there were pools quite deep enough to have given them a thorough wetting, to say no more, if they had missed their footing and tumbled in. But this did not happen. In due time, though with no little difficulty, they reached the spot where the brook came forth from the wood into the open day, and thence making a sharp turn to the right, skirted along by the edge of the trees, as if unwilling to part company with them.

"I guess we'd better get back into the lane now," said Miss Nancy, "we're a pretty good long way from home."

CHAPTER XII.

"Behind the door stand bags o'meal,
And in the ark is plenty.
And good hard cakes his mither makes.
And mony a sweeter dainty.
A good fat sow, a sleeky cow
Are standing in the byre;
While winking puss, wi' mealy mou,
Is playing round the fire."

—SCOTCH SONG.

THEY left the wood and the brook behind them, and crossed a large stubble-field; then got over a fence into another. They were in the midst of this when Nancy stopped Ellen, and bade her look up toward the west, where towered a high mountain, no longer hid from their view by the trees.

"I told you I'd show you where I live," said she. "Look up now,—clear to the top of the mountain, almost, and a little to the right;—do you see that little mite of a house there? Look sharp,—it's a'most as brown as the rock,—do you see it?—it's close by that big pine tree, but it don't look big from here—it's just by that little dark spot near the top?"

"I see it," said Ellen,—"I see it now; do you live 'way up there?"

"That's just what I do; and that's just what I wish I didn't. But granny likes it; she will live there. I'm blessed if I know what for, if it aint to plague me. Do you think you'd like to live up on the top of a mountain like that?"

"No, I don't think I should," said Ellen. "Isn't it very cold up there?"

"Cold! you don't know anything about it. The wind comes there, I tell you! enough to cut you in two; I have to take and hold on to the trees sometimes to keep from being blowed away. And then granny sends me out every

morning before it's light, no matter how deep the snow is, to look for the cow;—and it's so bitter cold I expect nothing else but I'll be froze to death some time."

"Oh," said Ellen, with a look of horror, "how can she do so?"

"O, she don't care," said the other; "she sees my nose freeze off every winter, and it don't make no difference."

"Freeze your nose off!" said Ellen.

"To be sure," said the other, nodding gravely,—"every winter; it grows out again when the warm weather comes."

"And is that the reason why it is so little?" said Ellen innocently, and with great curiosity.

"Little!" said the other, crimsoning in a fury,—"what do you mean by that? it's as big as your's any day, I can tell you."

Ellen involuntarily put her hand to her face, to see if Nancy spoke true. Somewhat reassured to find a very decided ridge where her companion's nose was rather wanting in the line of beauty, she answered in her turn,—

"It's no such thing, Nancy! you oughtn't to say so; you know better.'

"I *don't* know better! I *ought* to say so!" replied the other, furiously. "If I had your nose, I'd be glad to have it freeze off; I'd a sight rather have none. I'd pull it every day, if I was you, to make it grow."

"I shall believe what aunt Fortune said of you was true," said Ellen. She had colored very high, but she added no more, and walked on in dignified silence. Nancy stalked before her in silence that was meant to be dignified too, though it had not exactly that air. By degrees each cooled down, and Nancy was trying to find out what Miss Fortune had said of her, when on the edge of the next field they met the brook again. After running a long way to the right, it had swept round, and here was flowing gently in the opposite direction. But how were they ever to cross it? The brook ran in a smooth current between them and a rising bank on the other side, so high as to prevent their seeing what lay beyond. There were no stepping stones now. The only thing that looked like a bridge was an old log that had fallen across the brook, or perhaps had at some time or other been put there on purpose; and that lay more than half in the water; what remained of its sur-

face was green with moss and slippery with slime. Ellen was sadly afraid to trust herself on it; but what to do?—Nancy soon settled the question as far as she was concerned. Pulling off her thick shoes, she ran fearlessly upon the rude bridge; her clinging bare feet carried her safely over, and Ellen soon saw her reshoeing herself in triumph on the opposite side; but thus left behind and alone, her own difficulty increased.

"Pull off your shoes, and do as I did," said Nancy.

"I can't," said Ellen; "I'm afraid of wetting my feet; I know mamma wouldn't let me."

"Afraid of wetting your feet!" said the other; "what a chickaninny you are! Well, if you try to come over with your shoes on you'll fall in, I tell you; and then you'll wet more than your feet. But come along somehow, for I won't stand waiting here much longer."

Thus urged, Ellen set out upon her perilous journey over the bridge. Slowly and fearfully, and with as much care as possible, she set step by step upon the slippery log. Already half of the danger was passed, when, reaching forward to grasp Nancy's outstretched hand, she missed it,—*perhaps* that was Nancy's fault,—poor Ellen lost her balance and went in head foremost. The water was deep enough to cover her completely as she lay, though not enough to prevent her getting up again. She was greatly frightened, but managed to struggle up first to a sitting posture, and then to her feet, and then to wade out to the shore; though, dizzy and sick, she came near falling back again more than once. The water was very cold; and, thoroughly sobered, poor Ellen felt chill enough in body and mind too; all her fine spirits were gone; and not the less because Nancy's had risen to a great pitch of delight at her misfortune. The air rang with her laughter; she likened Ellen to every ridiculous thing she could think of. Too miserable to be angry, Ellen could not laugh, and would not cry, but she exclaimed in distress;—

"O what shall I do! I am so cold!"

"Come along," said Nancy; "give me your hand; we'll run right over to Mrs. Van Brunt's—'taint far—it's just over here. There," said she, as they got to the top of the bank, and came within sight of a house standing only a few fields off,—"there it is! Run, Ellen, and we'll be there directly."

"Who is Mrs. Van Brunt?" Ellen contrived to say, as Nancy hurried her along.

"Who is she?—run Ellen!—why she's just Mrs. Van Brunt—your Mr. Van Brunt's mother you know,—make haste, Ellen—we had rain enough the other day; I'm afraid it wouldn't be good for the grass if you stayed too long in one place;—hurry! I'm afraid you'll catch cold,—you got your feet wet after all, I'm sure."

Run they did; and a few minutes brought them to Mrs. Van Brunt's door. The little brick walk leading to it from the courtyard gate was as neat as a pin; so was everything else the eye could rest on; and when Nancy went in poor Ellen stayed *her* foot at the door, unwilling to carry her wet shoes and dripping garments any further. She could hear, however, what was going on.

"Hillo! Mrs. Van Brunt," shouted Nancy,—"where are you?—oh!—Mrs. Van Brunt, are you out of water?—'cos if you are I've brought you a plenty; the person that has it don't want it; she's just at the door; she wouldn't bring it in till she knew you wanted it; O, Mrs Van Brunt, don't look so or you'll kill me with laughing. Come and see! come and see."

The steps within drew near the door, and first Nancy showed herself, and then a little old woman, not very old either, of very kind, pleasant countenance.

"What is all this?" said she in great surprise. "Bless me! poor little dear! what is this?"

"Nothing in the world but a drowned rat, Mrs. Van Brunt, don't you see?" said Nancy.

"Go home, Nancy Vawse! go home," said the old lady; "you're a regular bad girl. I do believe this is some mischief o' yourn, go right off home; it's time you were after your cow a great while ago."

As she spoke, she drew Ellen in, and shut the door.

"Poor little dear," said the old lady, kindly, "what has happened to you? Come to the fire, love, you're trembling with the cold. Oh, dear! dear! your soaking wet; this is all along of Nancy somehow, I know; how was it, love? Aint you Miss Fortune's little girl? Never mind, don't talk, darling; there aint one bit of color in your face, not one bit."

Good Mrs. Van Brunt had drawn Ellen to the fire, and all

this while she was pulling off as fast as possible her wet clothes. Then sending a girl who was in waiting, for clean towels, she rubbed Ellen dry from head to foot, and wrapping her in a blanket, left her in a chair before the fire, while she went to seek something for her to put on. Ellen had managed to tell who she was, and how her mischance had come about, but little else, though the kind old lady had kept on pouring out words of sorrow and pity during the whole time. She came trotting back directly with one of her own short gowns, the only thing that she could lay hands on that was anywhere near Ellen's length. Enormously big it was for her, but Mrs. Van Brunt wrapped it round and round, and the blanket over it again, and then she bustled about till she had prepared a tumbler of hot drink, which she said was to keep Ellen from catching cold. It was anything but agreeable, being made from some bitter herb, and sweetened with molasses; but Ellen swallowed it, as she would anything else at such kind hands, and the old lady carried her herself into a little room opening out of the kitchen, and laid her in a bed that had been warmed for her. Excessively tired and weak as she was, Ellen scarcely needed the help of the hot herb tea to fall into a very deep sleep; perhaps it might not have lasted so very long as it did, but for that. Afternoon changed for evening, evening grew quite dark, still Ellen did not stir; and after every little journey into the bedroom to see how she was doing, Mrs. Van Brunt came back saying how glad she was to see her sleeping so finely. Other eyes looked on her for a minute,—kind and gentle eyes; though Mrs. Van. Brunt's were kind and gentle too; once a soft kiss touched her forehead, there was no danger of waking her.

It was perfectly dark in the little bedroom, and had been so a good while, when Ellen was aroused by some noise, and then a rough voice she knew very well. Feeling faint and weak, and not more than half awake yet, she lay still and listened. She heard the outer door open and shut, and then the voice said,

"So, mother, you've got my stray sheep here, have you?"

"Ay, ay," said the voice of Mrs. Van Brunt," have you been looking for her? how did you know she was here?"

"Looking for her! ay, looking for her ever since sundown. She has been missing at the house since some time this fore-

noon. I believe her aunt got a bit scared about her; any how I did. She's a queer little chip as ever I see."

"She's a dear little soul, *I* know," said his mother; "you needn't say nothin agin her, I aint a going to believe it."

"No more am I—I'm the best friend she's got, if she only knowed it; but don't you think," said Mr. Van Brunt, laughing, "I asked her to give me a kiss this forenoon, and if I'd been an owl she couldn't ha' been more scared; she went off like a streak, and Miss Fortune said she was as mad as she could be, and that's the last of her."

"How did you find her out?"

"I met that mischievous Vawse girl, and I made her tell me; she had no mind to at first. It'll be the worse for Ellen if she takes to that wicked thing."

"She won't. Nancy has been taking her a walk, and worked it so as to get her into the brook, and then she brought her here, just as dripping wet as she could be. I gave her something hot and put her to bed, and she'll do, I reckon; but I tell you it gave me queer feelings to see the poor little thing just as white as ashes, and all of a tremble, and looking so sorrowful too. She's sleeping finely now; but it aint right to see a child's face look so;—it aint right," repeated Mr. Van Brunt, thoughtfully.—"You ha'n't had supper, have you?"

"No, mother, and I must take that young one back. Aint she awake yet?"

"I'll see directly; but she aint going home, nor you neither, 'Brahm, till you've got your supper; it would be a sin to let her. She shall have a taste of my splitters this very night; I've been makin' them o' purpose for her. So you may just take off your hat and sit down."

"You mean to let her know where to come when she wants good things, mother. Well, I won't say splitters aint worth waiting for."

Ellen heard him sit down, and then she guessed from the words that passed that Mrs. Van Brunt and her little maid were busied in baking the cakes; she lay quiet.

"You're a good friend, 'Brahm," began the old lady again, "nobody knows that better than me; but I hope that poor little thing has got another one to-day that'll do more for her than you can."

"What, yourself, mother? I don't know about that."

"No, no; do you think I mean myself?—there, turn it quick, Sally!—Miss Alice has been here."

"How? this evening?"

"Just a little before dark, on her gray pony. She came in for a minute, and I took her—that'll burn, Sally!—I took her in to see the child while she was asleep, and I told her all you told me about her. She didn't say much, but she looked at her very sweet, as she always does, and I guess,—there—now I'll see after my little sleeper."

And presently Mrs. Van Brunt came to the bed-side with a light, and her arm full of Ellen's dry clothes. Ellen felt as if she could have put her arms round her kind old friend and hugged her with all her heart; but it was not her way to show her feelings before strangers. She suffered Mrs. Van Brunt to dress her in silence, only saying with a sigh, "How kind you are to me, ma'am!" to which the old lady replied with a kiss, and telling her she mustn't say a word about that.

The kitchen was bright with firelight and candlelight; the tea-table looked beautiful with its piles of white splitters, besides plenty of other and more substantial things; and at the corner of the hearth sat Mr. Van Brunt.

"So," said he, smiling, as Ellen came in and took her stand at the opposite corner,—"So I drove you away this morning? You aint mad with me yet, I hope."

Ellen crossed directly over to him, and putting her little hand in his great rough one, said, "I'm *very* much obliged to you, Mr. Van Brunt, for taking so much trouble to come and look after me."

She said it with a look of gratitude and trust that pleased him very much.

"Trouble, indeed!" said he, good-humoredly, "I'd take twice as much any day for what you wouldn't give me this forenoon. But never fear, Miss Ellen, I aint a-going to ask you that again."

He shook the little hand; and from that time Ellen and her rough charioteer were firm friends.

Mrs. Van Brunt now summoned them to table; and Ellen was well feasted with the splitters, which were a kind of rich short-cake baked in irons, very thin and crisp, and then split

in two and buttered, whence their name. A pleasant meal was that. Whatever an epicure might have thought of the tea, to Ellen in her famished state it was delicious; and no epicure could have found fault with the cold ham and the butter and the cakes; but far better than all was the spirit of kindness that was there. Ellen feasted on that more than on anything else. If her host and hostess were not very polished, they could not have been outdone in their kind care of her and kind attention to her wants. And when the supper was at length over, Mrs. Van Brunt declared a little color had come back to the pale cheeks. The color came back in good earnest a few minutes after, when a great tortoise-shell cat walked into the room. Ellen jumped down from her chair, and presently was bestowing the tenderest caresses upon pussy, who stretched out her head and purred as if she liked them very well.

"What a nice cat!" said Ellen.

"She has five kittens," said Mrs. Van Brunt.

"Five kittens!" said Ellen. "Oh, may I come some time and see them?"

"You shall see 'em right away, dear, and come as often as you like too. Sally, just take a basket, and go fetch them kittens here."

Upon this, Mr. Van Brunt began to talk about its being time to go, if they were going. But his mother insisted that Ellen should stay where she was; she said she was not fit to go home that night, that she oughtn't to walk a step, and that 'Brahm' should go and tell Miss Fortune the child was safe and well, and would be with her early in the morning. Mr. Van Brunt shook his head two or three times, but finally agreed, to Ellen's great joy. When he came back, she was sitting on the floor before the fire, with all the five kittens in her lap, and the old mother cat walking around and over her and them. But she looked up with a happier face than he had ever seen her wear, and told him she was "*so* much obliged to him for taking such a long walk for her;" and Mr. Van Brunt felt that, like his oxen, he could have done a great deal more with pleasure.

CHAPTER XIII.

It's hardly in a body's pow'r,
To keep at times frae being sour.
BURNS.

BEFORE the sun was up the next morning, Mrs. Van Brunt came into Ellen's room and aroused her.

"It's a real shame to wake you up," she said, "when you were sleeping so finely; but 'Brahm wants to be off to his work, and won't stay for breakfast. Slept sound, did you?"

"O yes, indeed; as sound as a top," said Ellen, rubbing her eyes;—"I am hardly awake yet."

"I declare it's too bad," said Mrs. Van Brunt,—"but there's no help for it. You don't feel no headache, do you, nor pain in your bones?"

"No, ma'am, not a bit of it; I feel nicely."

"Ah! well," said Mrs. Van Brunt, "then your tumble into the brook didn't do you any mischief; I thought it wouldn't. Poor little soul!"

"I am very glad I did fall in," said Ellen, "for if I hadn't I shouldn't have come here, Mrs. Van Brunt."

The old lady instantly kissed her.

"O! mayn't I just take one look at the kitties?" said Ellen, when she was ready to go.

"Indeed you shall," said Mrs. Van Brunt, "if 'Brahm's hurry was ever so much;—and it aint, besides. Come here, dear."

She took Ellen back to a waste lumber-room, where in a corner, on some old pieces of carpet, lay pussy and her family. How fondly Ellen's hand was passed over each little soft back! how hard it was for her to leave them!

"Wouldn't you like to take one home with you, dear?" said Mrs. Van Brunt, at length.

"O! may I?" said Ellen, looking up in delight; "are you in earnest? O, thank you, dear Mrs. Van Brunt! O, I shall be so glad!"

"Well, choose one then, dear,—choose the one you like best, and 'Brahm shall carry it for you."

The choice was made, and Mrs. Van Brunt and Ellen returned to the kitchen, where Mr. Van Brunt had already been waiting some time. He shook his head when he saw what was in the basket his mother handed to him.

"That won't do," said he; "I can't go that, mother. I'll undertake to see Miss Ellen safe home, but the cat 'ud be more than I could manage. I think I'd hardly get off with a whole skin 'tween the one and t'other."

"Well, now!" said Mrs. Van Brunt.

Ellen gave a longing look at her little black and white favorite, which was uneasily endeavoring to find out the height of the basket, and mewing at the same time with a most ungratified expression. However, though sadly disappointed, she submitted with a very good grace to what could not be helped. First setting down the little cat out of the basket it seemed to like so ill, and giving it one farewell pat and squeeze, she turned to the kind old lady who stood watching her, and throwing her arms around her neck, silently spoke her gratitude in a hearty hug and kiss.

"Good-bye, ma'am," said she; "I may come and see them sometime again, and see you, mayn't I?"

"Indeed you shall, my darling," said the old woman, "just as often as you like;—just as often as you can get away. I'll make Brahm bring you home sometimes. 'Brahm, you'll bring her, won't you?"

"There's two words to that bargain, mother, I can tell you; but if I don't, I'll know the reason on't."

And away they went. Ellen drew two or three sighs at first, but she could not help brightening up soon. It was early—not sunrise; the cool freshness of the air was enough to give one new life and spirit; the sky was fair and bright; and Mr. Van Brunt marched along at a quick pace. Enlivened by the exercise, Ellen speedily forgot everything disagreeable; and her little head was filled with pleasant things. She watched where the silver light in the east foretold the sun's coming. She watched the silver change to

gold, till a rich yellow tint was flung over the whole landscape; and then broke the first rays of light upon the tops of the western hills,—the sun was up. It was a new sight to Ellen.

"How beautiful! O, how beautiful!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," said Mr. Van Brunt, in his slow way, "it'll be a fine day for the field. I guess I'll go with the oxen over to that 'ere big meadow."

"Just look," said Ellen, "how the light comes creeping down the side of the mountain,—now it has got to the wood,—O, do look at the tops of the trees! O! I wish mamma was here."

Mr. Van Brunt didn't know what to say to this. He rather wished so too, for her sake.

"There," said Ellen, "now the sunshine is on the fence, and the road, and everything. I wonder what is the reason that the sun shines first upon the top of the mountain, and then comes so slowly down the side; why don't it shine on the whole at once?"

Mr. Van Brunt shook his head in ignorance. "He guessed it always did so," he said.

"Yes," said Ellen, "I suppose it does, but that's the very thing,—I want to know the reason why. And I noticed just now, it shone in my face before it touched my hands. Isn't it queer?"

"Humph!—there's a great many queer things, if you come to that," said Mr. Van Brunt, philosophically.

But Ellen's head ran on from one thing to another, and her next question was not so wide of the subject as her companion might have thought.

"Mr. Van Brunt, are there any schools about here?"

"Schools?" said the person addressed, "yes—there's plenty of schools."

"Good ones?" said Ellen.

"Well, I don't exactly know about that; there's Captain Conklin's, that had ought to be a good 'un; he's a regular smart man, they say."

"Whereabouts is that? said Ellen.

"His school? it's a mile or so the other side of my house."

"And how far is it from your house to aunt Fortune's?"

"A good deal better than two mile, but we'll be there before long. You aint tired, be you?"

"No," said Ellen. But this reminder gave a new turn to her thoughts, and her spirits were suddenly checked. Her former brisk and springing step changed to so slow and lagging a one, that Mr. Van Brunt more than once repeated his remark that he saw she was tired.

If it was that, Ellen grew tired very fast; she lagged more and more as they neared the house, and at last quite fell behind, and allowed Mr. Van Brunt to go in first.

Miss Fortune was busy about the breakfast, and as Mr. Van Brunt afterwards described it, "looking as if she could have bitten off a tenpenny nail," and indeed as if the operation would have been rather gratifying than otherwise. She gave them no notice at first, bustling to and fro with great energy, but all of a sudden she brought up directly in front of Ellen, and said,

"Why didn't you come home last night?"

The words were jerked out rather than spoken.

"I got wet in the brook," said Ellen, "and Mrs. Van Brunt was so kind as to keep me."

"Which way did you go out of the house yesterday?"

"Through the front door?"

"The front door was locked."

"I unlocked it."

"What did you go out that way for?"

"I didn't want to come this way."

"Why not?"

Ellen hesitated.

"Why not?" demanded Miss Fortune still more emphatically than before.

"I didn't want to see you, ma'am," said Ellen flushing.

"If ever you do so again!" said Miss Fortune in a kind of cold fury; "I've a great mind to whip you for this, as ever I had to eat."

The flush faded on Ellen's cheek, and a shiver visibly passed over her—not from fear. She stood with downcast eyes and compressed lips, a certain instinct of childish dignity warning her to be silent. Mr. Van Brunt put himself in between.

"Come, come!" said he, "this is getting to be too much

of a good thing. Beat your cream, ma'am, as much as you like, or if you want to try your hand on something else you'll have to take me first, I promise you."

"Now don't *you* meddle, Van Brunt," said the lady sharply, "with what aint no business o' yourn."

"I don't know about that," said Mr. Van Brunt,—"maybe it *is* my business; but meddle or no meddle, Miss Fortune, it is time for me to be in the field; and if you ha'nt no better breakfast for Miss Ellen and me than all this here, we'll just go right away hum again; but there's something in your kettle there that smells uncommonly nice, and I wish you'd just let us have it and no more words."

No more words did Miss Fortune waste on any one that morning. She went on with her work and dished up the breakfast in silence, and with a face that Ellen did not quite understand; only she thought she had never in her life seen one so disagreeable. The meal was a very solemn and uncomfortable one. Ellen could scarcely swallow, and her aunt was near in the same condition. Mr. Van Brunt and the old lady alone despatched their breakfast as usual; with no other attempts at conversation than the common mumbling on the part of the latter, which nobody minded, and one or two strange grunts from the former, the meaning of which, if they had any, nobody tried to find out.

There was a breach now between Ellen and her aunt that neither could make any effort to mend. Miss Fortune did not renew the disagreeable conversation that Mr. Van Brunt had broken off; she left Ellen entirely to herself, scarcely speaking to her, or seeming to know when she went out or came in. And this lasted day after day. Wearily they passed. After one or two, Mr. Van Brunt seemed to stand just where he did before in Miss Fortune's good graces;—but not Ellen. To her, when others were not by, her face wore constantly something of the same cold, hard, disagreeable expression it had put on after Mr. Van Brunt's interference,—a look that Ellen came to regard with absolute abhorrence. She kept away by herself as much as she could; but she did not know what to do with her time, and for want of something better often spent it in tears. She went to bed cheerless night after night, and arose spiritless morning after morning; and this lasted till Mr. Van Brunt more than once told his mother

that "that poor little thing was going wandering about like a ghost, and growing thinner and paler every day; and he didn't know what she would come to if she went on so."

Ellen longed now for a letter with unspeakable longing,—but none came;—day after day brought new disappointment, each day more hard to bear. Of her only friend, Mr. Van Brunt, she saw little; he was much away in the fields during the fine weather, and when it rained Ellen herself was prisoner at home, whither he never came but at meal times. The old grandmother was very much disposed to make much of her; but Ellen shrank, she hardly knew why, from her fond caresses, and never found herself alone with her if she could help it; for then she was regularly called to the old lady's side and obliged to go through a course of kissing, fondling, and praising, she would gladly have escaped. In her aunt's presence this was seldom attempted, and never permitted to go on. Miss Fortune was sure to pull Ellen away and bid her mother "stop that palavering,"—avowing that "it made her sick." Ellen had one faint hope that her aunt would think of sending her to school, as she employed her in nothing at home, and certainly took small delight in her company; but no hint of the kind dropped from Miss Fortune's lips; and Ellen's longing look for this as well as for a word from her mother was daily doomed to be ungratified and to grow more keen by delay.

One pleasure only remained to Ellen in the course of the day, and that one she enjoyed with the carefulness of a miser. It was seeing the cows milked, morning and evening. For this she got up very early and watched till the men came for the pails; and then away she bounded, out of the house and to the barnyard. There were the milky mothers, five in number, standing about, each in her own corner of the yard or cowhouse, waiting to be relieved of their burden of milk. They were fine gentle animals, in excellent condition, and looking every way happy and comfortable; nothing living under Mr. Van Brunt's care was ever suffered to look otherwise. He was always in the barn or barnyard at milking time, and under his protection Ellen felt safe and looked on at her ease. It was a very pretty scene—at least she thought so. The gentle cows standing quietly to be milked as if they enjoyed it, and munching the cud; and the white streams of

milk foaming into the pails; then there was the interest of seeing whether Sam or Johnny would get through first; and how near Jane or Dolly would come to rivalling Streaky's fine pailful; and at last Ellen allowed Mr. Van Brunt to teach herself how to milk. She began with trembling, but learnt fast enough; and more than one pailful of milk that Miss Fortune strained had been, unknown to her, drawn by Ellen's fingers. These minutes in the farmyard were the pleasantest in Ellen's day. While they lasted every care was forgotten and her little face was as bright as the morning; but the milking was quickly over, and the cloud gathered on Ellen's brow almost as soon as the shadow of the house fell upon it.

"Where is the post-office, Mr. Van Brunt?" she asked one morning, as she stood watching the sharpening of an axe upon the grindstone. The axe was in that gentleman's hand, and its edge carefully laid to the whirling-stone, which one of the farm-boys was turning.

"Where is the post-office? Why, over to Thirlwall to be sure," replied Mr. Van Brunt, glancing up at her from his work,—"Faster, Johnny."

"And how often do the letters come here?" said Ellen.

"Take care, Johnny!—some more water,—mind your business, will you!—Just as often as I go to fetch 'em, Miss Ellen, and no oftener."

"And how often do you go Mr. Van Brunt?"

"Only when I've some other errand Miss Ellen; my grain would never be in the barn if I was running to the post-office every other thing,—and for what aint there too. I don't get a letter but two or three times a year I s'pose, though I call,—I guess,—half a dozen times."

"Ah but there's one there now, or soon will be, I know, for me," said Ellen. "When do you think you'll go again Mr. Van Brunt?"

"Now if I'd ha' knowed that I'd ha' gone to Thirlwall yesterday—I was within a mile of it. I don't see as I can go this week anyhow in the world; but I'll make some errand there the first day I can, Miss Ellen, that you may depend on. You sha'n't wait for your letter a bit longer than I can help."

"O thank you, Mr. Van Brunt—you're very kind. Then the letters never come except when you go after them?"

"No;—yes—they do come once in a while by old Mr. Swaim, but he ha'n't been here this great while."

"And who's he?" said Ellen.

"O he's a queer old chip that goes round the country on all sorts of errands; he comes along once in a while. That'll do, Johnny,—I believe this here tool is as sharp as I have any occasion for."

"What's the use of pouring water upon the grindstone?" said Ellen;—"why wouldn't it do as well dry?"

"I can't tell, I am sure," replied Mr. Van Brunt, who was slowly drawing his thumb over the edge of the axe;—"your questions are a good deal too sharp for me, Miss Ellen; I only know it would spoil the axe, or the grinstone, or both most likely."

"It's very odd," said Ellen, thoughtfully;—"I wish I knew everything. But, oh dear!—I am not likely to know anything," said she, her countenance suddenly changing from its pleased inquisitive look to a cloud of disappointment and sorrow. Mr. Van Brunt noticed the change.

"Aint your aunt going to send you to school then?" said he.

"I don't know," said Ellen sighing;—"she never speaks about it, nor about anything else. But I declare I'll make her!" she exclaimed changing again. "I'll go right in and ask her, and then she'll have to tell me. I will! I am tired of living so. I'll know what she means to do, and then I can tell what *I* must do."

Mr. Van Brunt, seemingly dubious about the success of this line of conduct, stroked his chin and his axe alternately two or three times in silence, and finally walked off. Ellen, without waiting for her courage to cool, went directly into the house.

Miss Fortune however was not in the kitchen; to follow her into her secret haunts, the dairy, cellar, or lower kitchen, was not to be thought of. Ellen waited awhile, but her aunt did not come, and the excitement of the moment cooled down. She was not quite so ready to enter upon the business as she had felt at first; she had even some qualms about it.

"But I'll do it," said Ellen to herself;—"it will be hard but I'll do it!"

CHAPTER XIV.

> For my part, he keeps me here rustically
> At home, or, to speak more properly, stays
> Me here at home unkept.
>
> As You Like It.

The next morning after breakfast Ellen found the chance she rather dreaded than wished for. Mr. Van Brunt had gone out; the old lady had not left her room; and Miss Fortune was quietly seated by the fire, busied with some mysteries of cooking. Like a true coward, Ellen could not make up her mind to bolt at once into the thick of the matter, but thought to come to it gradually,—always a bad way.

"What is that, aunt Fortune?" said she, after she had watched her with a beating heart for about five minutes.

"What is what?"

"I mean, what is that you are straining through the colander into that jar?"

"Hop-water."

"What is it for?"

"I'm scalding this meal with it to make turnpikes."

"Turnpikes!" said Ellen;—"I thought turnpikes were high smooth roads with toll-gates every now and then—that's what mamma told me they were."

"That's all the kind of turnpikes your mamma knew anything about, I reckon," said Miss Fortune, in a tone that conveyed the notion that Mrs. Montgomery's education had been very incomplete. "And indeed," she added immediately after, "if she had made more turnpikes and paid fewer tolls it would have been just as well, I'm thinking."

Ellen felt the tone, if she did not thoroughly understand the words. She was silent a moment; then remembering her purpose, she began again.

"What are these then, aunt Fortune?"

"Cakes, child, cakes!—turnpike cakes—what I raise the bread with."

"What, those little brown cakes I have seen you melt in water and mix in the flour when you make bread?"

"Mercy on us! yes! you've seen hundreds of 'em since you've been here if you never saw one before."

"I never did," said Ellen. "But what are they called turnpikes for?"

"The land knows!—I don't. For mercy's sake stop asking me questions, Ellen; I don't know what's got into you; you'll drive me crazy."

"But there's one more question I want to ask very much," said Ellen, with her heart beating.

"Well ask it then quick, and have done, and take yourself off. I have other fish to fry than to answer all your questions."

Miss Fortune however was still quietly seated by the fire stirring her meal and hop-water, and Ellen could not be quick; the words stuck in her throat,—came out at last.

"Aunt Fortune, I wanted to ask you if I may go to school."

"Yes."

Ellen's heart sprang with a feeling of joy, a little qualified by the peculiar dry tone in which the word was uttered.

"When may I go?"

"As soon as you like."

"O thank you ma'am. To which school shall I go aunt Fortune?"

"To whichever you like."

"But I don't know anything about them," said Ellen;—"how can I tell which is best?"

Miss Fortune was silent.

"What schools are there near here?" said Ellen.

"There's Captain Conklin's down at the Cross, and Miss Emerson's at Thirlwall."

Ellen hesitated. The name was against her, but nevertheless she concluded on the whole that the lady's school would be the pleasantest.

"Is Miss Emerson any relation of yours?" she asked.

"No."

"I think I should like to go to her school the best. I will go there if you will let me,—may I?"

"Yes."

"And I will begin next Monday,—may I?"

"Yes."

Ellen wished exceedingly that her aunt would speak in some other tone of voice; it was a continual damper to her rising hopes.

"I'll get my books ready," said she,—"and look 'em over a little too, I guess. But what will be the best way for me to go, aunt Fortune?"

"I don't know."

"I couldn't walk so far, could I?"

"You know best."

"I couldn't I am sure," said Ellen;—"it's four miles to Thirlwall, Mr. Van Brunt said; that would be too much for me to walk twice a day; and I should be afraid besides."

A dead silence.

"But aunt Fortune do please tell me what I am to do. How can I know unless you tell me? What way is there that I can go to school?"

"It is unfortunate that I don't keep a carriage," said Miss Fortune,—"but Mr. Van Brunt can go for you morning and evening in the ox-cart, if that will answer.

"The ox-cart! But dear me! it would take him all day, aunt Fortune. It takes hours and hours to go and come with the oxen;—Mr. Van Brunt wouldn't have time to do anything but carry me to school and bring me home."

"Of course,—but that's of no consequence," said Miss Fortune, in the same dry tone.

"Then I can't go—there's no help for it," said Ellen despondingly. "Why didn't you say so before? When you said yes I thought you meant yes."

She covered her face. Miss Fortune rose with a half smile and carried her jar of scalded meal into the pantry. She then came back and commenced the operation of washing up the breakfast things.

"Ah if I only had a little pony," said Ellen, "that would carry me there and back, and go trotting about with me everywhere,—how nice that would be!"

"Yes, that would be very nice! And who do you think would go trotting about after the pony? I suppose you would leave that to Mr. Van Brunt; and I should have to go

trotting about after you, to pick you up in case you broke your neck in some ditch or gulley ;—it would be a very nice affair altogether I think."

Ellen was silent. Her hopes had fallen to the ground, and her disappointment was unsoothed by one word of kindness or sympathy. With all her old grievances fresh in her mind, she sat thinking her aunt was the very most disagreeable person she had ever had the misfortune to meet with. No amiable feelings were working within her ; and the cloud on her brow was of displeasure and disgust, as well as sadness and sorrow. Her aunt saw it.

"What are you thinking of?" said she, rather sharply.

"I am thinking," said Ellen, "I am very sorry I cannot go to school."

"Why what do you want to learn so much? you know how to read and write and cipher, don't you?"

"Read and write and cipher!" said Ellen,—"to be sure I do ; but that's nothing ;—that's only the beginning."

"Well, what do you want to learn besides?"

"Oh, a great many things."

"Well what?"

"Oh, a great many things," said Ellen ;—French, and Italian, and Latin, and music, and arithmetic, and chymistry, and all about animals and plants and insects,—I forget what it's called,—and—O I can't recollect ; a great many things. Every now and then I think of something I want to learn ; I can't remember them now. But I'm doing nothing," said Ellen sadly,—"learning nothing—I am not studying and improving myself as I meant to ; mamma will be disappointed when she comes back, and I meant to please her so much!"

The tears were fast coming ; she put her hand upon her eyes to force them back.

"If you're so tired of being idle," said Miss Fortune, "I'll warrant I'll give you something to do ; and something to learn too, that you want enough more than all those crinkum-crankums ; I wonder what good they'd ever do you! That's the way your mother was brought up I suppose. If she had been trained to use her hands and do something useful instead of thinking herself above it, maybe she wouldn't have had to go to sea for her health just now ; it doesn't do for women to be bookworms."

"Mamma isn't a bookworm!" said Ellen indignantly;—"I don't know what you mean; and she never thinks herself above being useful; it's very strange you should say so when you don't know anything about her."

"I know she ha'n't brought you up to know manners, anyhow," said Miss Fortune. "Look here, I'll give you something to do,—just you put those plates and dishes together ready for washing, while I am down stairs."

Ellen obeyed, unwillingly enough. She had neither knowledge of the business nor any liking for it; so it is no wonder Miss Fortune at her return was not well pleased.

"But I never did such a thing before," said Ellen.

"There it is now!" said Miss Fortune. "I wonder where your eyes have been every single time that I have done it since you have been here. I should think your own sense might have told you! But you're too busy learning of Mr. Van Brunt to know what's going on in the house. Is that what you call made ready for washing? Now just have the goodness to scrape every plate clean off and put them nicely in a pile here; and turn out the slops out of the tea-cups and saucers and set them by themselves.—Well! what makes you handle them so? are you afraid they'll burn you?"

"I don't like to take hold of things people have drunk out of," said Ellen, who was indeed touching the cups and saucers very delicately with the tips of her fingers.

"Look here," said Miss Fortune,—"don't you let me hear no more of that, or I vow I'll give you something to do you won't like. Now put the spoons here, and the knives and forks together here; and carry the salt-cellar and the pepper-box and the butter and the sugar into the buttery."

"I don't know where to put them," said Ellen.

"Come along then, and I'll show you; it's time you did. I reckon you'll feel better when you've something to do, and you shall have plenty. There—put them in that cupboard, and set the butter up here, and put the bread in this box, do you see? now don't let me have to show you twice over."

This was Ellen's first introduction to the buttery; she had never dared to go in there before. It was a long light closet or pantry, lined on the left side, and at the further end, with wide shelves up to the ceiling. On these shelves stood many capacious pans and basins, of tin and earthenware,

filled with milk, and most of them coated with superb yellow cream. Midway was the window, before which Miss Fortune was accustomed to skim her milk; and at the side of it was the mouth of a wooden pipe, or covered trough, which conveyed the refuse milk down to an enormous hogshead standing at the lower kitchen door, whence it was drawn as wanted for the use of the pigs. Beyond the window in the buttery, and on the higher shelves, were rows of yellow cheeses; forty or fifty were there at least. On the right hand of the door was the cupboard, and a short range of shelves, which held in ordinary all sorts of matters for the table, both dishes and eatables. Floor and shelves were well painted with thick yellow paint, hard and shining, and clean as could be; and there was a faint pleasant smell of dairy things.

Ellen did not find out all this at once, but in the course of a day or two, during which her visits to the buttery were many. Miss Fortune kept her word, and found her plenty to do; Ellen's life soon became a pretty busy one. She did not like this at all; it was a kind of work she had no love for; yet no doubt it was a good exchange for the miserable moping life she had lately led. Anything was better than that. One concern, however, lay upon poor Ellen's mind with pressing weight,—her neglected studies and wasted time; for no better than wasted she counted it. "What shall I do?" she said to herself, after several of these busy days had passed; "I am doing nothing—I am learning nothing—I shall forget all I have learnt, directly. At this rate I shall not know any more than all these people around me; and what *will* mamma say?—Well, if I can't go to school I know what I will do," she said, taking a sudden resolve, "I'll study by myself! I'll see what I can do; it will be better than nothing, any way. I'll begin this very day!"

With new life Ellen sprang up stairs to her room, and forthwith began pulling all the things out of her trunk to get at her books. They were at the very bottom; and by the time she had reached them half the floor was strewn with the various articles of her wardrobe; without minding them in her first eagerness, Ellen pounced at the books.

"Here you are, my dear Numa Pompilius," said she,

drawing out a little French book she had just begun to read, "and here *you* are, old grammar and dictionary,—and here is my history,—very glad to see you, Mr. Goldsmith!—and what in the world's this?—wrapped up as if it was something great,—O, my expositor; I am not glad to see *you*, I am sure; never want to look at your face, or your back again. My copy-book—I wonder who'll set copies for me now;—my arithmetic, that's you!—geography and atlas—all right;—and my slate; but dear me! I don't believe I've such a thing as a slate-pencil in the world; where shall I get one, I wonder?—well, I'll manage. And that's all,—that's all, I believe."

With all her heart Ellen would have begun her studying at once, but there were all her things on the floor, silently saying, "Put us up first."

"I declare," said she to herself, "it's too bad to have nothing in the shape of a bureau to keep one's clothes in. I wonder if I am to live in a trunk, as mamma says, all the time I am here, and have to go down to the bottom of it every time I want a pocket-handkerchief or a pair of stockings. How I do despise those gray stockings!—But what can I do? it's too bad to squeeze my nice things up so. I wonder what is behind those doors. I'll find out, I know, before long."

On the north side of Ellen's room were three doors. She had never opened them, but now took it into her head to see what was there, thinking she might possibly find what would help her out of her difficulty. She had some little fear of meddling with anything in her aunt's domain; so she fastened her own door, to guard against interruption while she was busied in making discoveries.

At the foot of her bed, in the corner, was one large door fastened by a button, as indeed they were all. This opened, she found, upon a flight of stairs, leading as she supposed to the garret, but Ellen did not care to go up and see. They were lighted by half of a large window, across the middle of which the the stairs went up. She quickly shut that door, and opened the next, a little one. Here she found a tiny closet under the stairs, lighted by the other half of the window. There was nothing in it but a broad low shelf or step under the stairs, where Ellen presently decided she could

stow away her books very nicely. "It only wants a little brushing out," said Ellen, "and it will do very well." The other door, in the other corner, admitted her to a large light closet, perfectly empty. "Now if there were only some hooks or pegs here," thought Ellen, "to hang up dresses on —but why shouldn't I drive some nails?—I will! I will! O, that'll be fine!

Unfastening her door in a hurry she ran down stairs; and her heart beating, between pleasure and the excitement of daring so far without her aunt's knowledge, she ran out and crossed the chip-yard to the barn, where she had some hope of finding Mr. Van Brunt. By the time she got to the little cow-house door a great noise of knocking or pounding in the barn made her sure he was there, and she went on to the lower barn-floor. There he was, he and the two farm boys, (who, by-the-by, were grown men) all three threshing wheat. Ellen stopped at the door, and for a minute forgot what she had come for in the pleasure of looking at them. The clean floor was strewn with grain, upon which the heavy flails came down one after another, with quick regular beat,—one—two—three—one—two—three,—keeping perfect time. The pleasant sound could be heard afar off; though, indeed, where Ellen stood it was rather too loud to be pleasant. Her little voice had no chance of being heard; she stood still and waited. Presently Johnny who was opposite caught a sight of her, and without stopping his work, said to his leader, "Somebody there for you, Mr. Van Brunt." That gentleman's flail ceased its motion, then he threw it down, and went to the door to help Ellen up the high step.

"Well," said he, "have you come out to see what's going on?"

"No," said Ellen, "I've been looking,—but Mr. Van Brunt could you be so good as to let me have a hammer and half-a-dozen nails?"

"A hammer and half-a-dozen nails;—come this way," said he.

They went out of the barn-yard and across the chip-yard to an outhouse below the garden and not far from the spout, called the poultry-house; though it was quite as much the property of the hogs, who had a regular sleeping apartment there, where corn was always fed out to the fatting ones.

Opening a kind of granary store-room, where the corn for this purpose was stowed, Mr. Van Brunt took down from a shelf a large hammer and a box of nails, and asked Ellen what size she wanted.

"Pretty large."

"So?"

"No, a good deal bigger yet I should like."

"'A good deal bigger yet,'—who wants 'em?"

"I do," said Ellen, smiling.

"You do! do you think your little arms can manage that big hammer?"

"I don't know; I guess so; I'll try."

"Where do you want 'em driv?"

"Up in a closet in my room," said Ellen, speaking as softly as if she had feared her aunt was at the corner; "I want 'em to hang up dresses and things."

Mr. Van Brunt half smiled, and put up the hammer and nails on the shelf again.

"Now I'll tell you what we'll do," said he;—"you can't manage them big things; I'll put 'em up for you to-night when I come in to supper."

"But I'm afraid she won't let you," said Ellen doubtfully.

"Never you mind about that," said he, "I'll fix it. Maybe we won't ask her."

"O thank you!" said Ellen joyfully, her face recovering its full sunshine in answer to his smile, and clapping her hands she ran back to the house, while more slowly Mr. Van Brunt returned to the threshers. Ellen seized dust-pan and brush and ran up to her room; and setting about the business with right good will, she soon had her closets in beautiful order. The books, writing-desk, and work-box were then bestowed very carefully in the one; in the other her coats and dresses neatly folded up in a pile on the floor, waiting till the nails should be driven. Then the remainder of her things were gathered up from the floor and neatly arranged in the trunk again. Having done all this, Ellen's satisfaction was unbounded. By this time dinner was ready. As soon after dinner as she could escape from Miss Fortune's calls upon her, Ellen stole up to her room and her books, and began work in earnest. The whole afternoon was spent over

sums and verbs and maps and pages of history. A little before tea, as Ellen was setting the table, Mr. Van Brunt came into the kitchen with a bag on his back.

"What have you got there, Mr. Van Brunt?" said Miss Fortune.

"A bag of seed corn."

"What are you going to do with it?"

"Put it up in the garret for safe keeping."

"Set it down in the corner and I'll take it up to-morrow."

"Thank you, ma'am,—rather go myself, if it's all the same to you. You needn't be scared, I've left my shoes at the door. Miss Ellen, I believe I've got to go through your room."

Ellen was glad to run before to hide her laughter. When they reached her room Mr. Van Brunt produced a hammer out of the bag, and taking a handful of nails from his pocket, put up a fine row of them along her closet wall; then while she hung up her dresses he went on to the garret, and Ellen heard him hammering there too. Presently he came down and they returned to the kitchen.

"What's all that knocking?" said Miss Fortune.

"I've been driving some nails," said Mr. Van Brunt coolly.

"Up in the garret?"

"Yes, and in Miss Ellen's closet; she said she wanted some."

"You should ha' spoke to *me* about it," said Miss Fortune to Ellen. There was displeasure enough in her face; but she said no more, and the matter blew over much better than Ellen had feared.

Ellen steadily pursued her plan of studying, in spite of some discouragements.

A letter written about ten days after gave her mother an account of her endeavors and of her success. It was a despairing account. Ellen complained that she wanted help to understand, and lacked time to study; that her aunt kept her busy, and, she believed, took pleasure in breaking her off from her books; and she bitterly said her mother must expect to find an ignorant little daughter when she come home. It ended with, "O, if I could just see you, and kiss you, and put my arms round you, mamma, I'd be willing to die!"

This letter was despatched the next morning by Mr. Van Brunt; and Ellen waited and watched with great anxiety for his return from Thirlwall in the afternoon.

CHAPTER XV.

An ant dropped into the water; a wood-pigeon took pity of her and threw her a little bough.—L'ESTRANGE.

THE afternoon was already half spent when Mr. Van Brunt's ox-cart was seen returning. Ellen was standing by the little gate that opened on the chip-yard; and with her heart beating anxiously she watched the slow-coming oxen;—how slowly they came! At last they turned out of the lane and drew the cart up the ascent; and stopping beneath the apple-tree Mr. Van Brunt leisurely got down, and flinging back his whip came to the gate. But the little face that met him there, quivering with hope and fear, made his own quite sober. "I'm really *very* sorry, Miss Ellen,—" he began.

That was enough. Ellen waited to hear no more, but turned away, the cold chill of disappointment coming over her heart. She had borne the former delays pretty well, but this was one too many, and she felt sick. She went round to the front stoop, where scarcely ever anybody came, and sitting down on the steps wept sadly and despairingly.

It might have been half an hour or more after, that the kitchen door slowly opened and Ellen came in. Wishing her aunt should not see her swollen eyes, she was going quietly through to her own room when Miss Fortune called her. Ellen stopped. Miss Fortune was sitting before the fire with an open letter lying in her lap and another in her hand. The latter she held out to Ellen, saying, "Here child, come and take this."

"What is it?" said Ellen, slowly coming towards her.

"Don't you see what it is?" said Miss Fortune, still holding it out.

"But who is it from?" said Ellen.

"Your mother."

"A letter from mamma, and not to me!" said Ellen with changing color. She took it quick from her aunt's hand. But her color changed more as her eye fell upon the first words, "My dear Ellen," and turning the paper she saw upon the back, "Miss Ellen Montgomery." Her next look was to her aunt's face, with her eye fired and her cheek paled with anger, and when she spoke her voice was not the same.

"This is *my* letter," she said trembling;—"who opened it?"

Miss Fortune's conscience must have troubled her a little, for her eye wavered uneasily. Only for a second though.

"Who opened it?" she answered; "*I* opened it. I should like to know who has a better right. And I shall open every one that comes, to serve you for looking so;—that you may depend upon."

The look and the words and the injury together, fairly put Ellen beside herself. She dashed the letter to the ground, and livid and trembling with various feelings—rage was not the only one,—she ran from her aunt's presence. She did not shed any tears now; she could not; they were absolutely burnt up by passion. She walked, her room with trembling steps, clasping and wringing her hands now and then, wildly thinking what *could* she do to get out of this dreadful state of things, and unable to see anything but misery before her. She walked for she could not sit down; but presently she felt that she could not breathe the air of the house; and taking her bonnet she went down, passed through the kitchen and went out. Miss Fortune asked where she was going, and bade her stay within doors, but Ellen paid no attention to her.

She stood still a moment outside of the little gate. She might have stood long to look. The mellow light of an Indian-summer afternoon lay upon the meadow and the old barn and chip-yard; there was beauty in them all under its smile. Not a breath was stirring. The rays of the sun struggled through a blue haze, which hung upon the hills and softened every distant object; and the silence of nature all around was absolute, made more noticeable by the far-off voice of somebody, it might be Mr. Van Brunt, calling to his

oxen, very far off and not to be seen; the sound came softly to her ear through the stillness. "Peace," was the whisper of nature to her troubled child; but Ellen's heart was in a whirl; she could not hear the whisper. It was a relief however to be out of the house and in the sweet open air. Ellen breathed more freely, and pausing a moment there, and clasping her hands together once more in sorrow, she went down the road and out at the gate, and exchanging her quick broken step for a slow measured one, she took the way towards Thirlwall. Little regarding the loveliness which that day was upon every slope and roadside, Ellen presently quitted the Thirlwall road and half unconsciously turned into a path on the left which she had never taken before,—perhaps for that reason. It was not much traveled evidently; the grass grew green on both sides and even in the middle of the way, though here and there the track of wheels could be seen. Ellen did not care about where she was going; she only found it pleasant to walk on and get further from home. The road or lane led towards a mountain somewhat to the northwest of Miss Fortune's; the same which Mr. Van Brunt had once named to Ellen as "the Nose." After three quarters of an hour the road began gently to ascend the mountain, rising towards the north. About one-third of the way from the bottom Ellen came to a little footpath on the left which allured her by its promise of prettiness, and she forsook the lane for it. The promise was abundantly fulfilled; it was a most lovely wild woodway path; but withal not a little steep and rocky. Ellen began to grow weary. The lane went on towards the north; the path rather led off towards the southern edge of the mountain, rising all the while; but before she reached that Ellen came to what she thought a good resting-place, where the path opened upon a small level platform or ledge of the hill. The mountain rose steep behind her, and sank very steep immediately before her, leaving a very superb view of the open country from the northeast to the south-east. Carpeted with moss, and furnished with fallen stones and pieces of rock, this was a fine resting-place for the wayfarer, or loitering place for the lover of nature. Ellen seated herself on one of the stones, and looked sadly and wearily towards the east, at first very careless of the exceeding beauty of what she beheld there.

For miles and miles, on every side but the west, lay stretched before her a beautifully broken country. The November haze hung over it now like a thin veil, giving great sweetness and softness to the scene. Far in the distance a range of low hills showed like a misty cloud; near by, at the mountain's foot, the fields and farm-houses and roads lay a pictured map. About a mile and a half to the south rose the mountain where Nancy Vawse lived, craggy and bare; but the leafless trees and stern jagged rocks were wrapped in the haze; and through this the sun, now near the setting, threw his mellowing rays, touching every slope and ridge with a rich warm glow.

Poor Ellen did not heed the picturesque effect of all this, yet the sweet influences of nature reached her, and softened while they increased her sorrow. She felt her own heart sadly out of tune with the peace and loveliness of all she saw. Her eye sought those distant hills,—how very far off they were! and yet all that wide tract of country was but a little piece of what lay between her and her mother. Her eye sought those hills,—but her mind overpassed them and went far beyond, over many such a tract, till it reached the loved one at last. But oh! how much between! I cannot reach her!—she cannot reach me!" thought poor Ellen. Her eyes had been filling and dropping tears for some time, but now came the rush of the pent-up storm, and the floods of grief were kept back no longer.

When once fairly excited, Ellen's passions were always extreme. During the former peaceful and happy part of her life the occasions of such excitement had been very rare. Of late unhappily they had occurred much oftener. Many were the bitter fits of tears she had known within a few weeks. But now it seemed as if all the scattered causes of sorrow that had wrought those tears were gathered together and pressing upon her at once; and that the burden would crush her to the earth. To the earth it brought her literally. She slid from her seat at first, and embracing the stone on which she had sat, she leaned her head there; but presently in her agony quitting her hold of that, she cast herself down upon the moss, lying at full length upon the cold ground, which seemed to her childish fancy the best friend she had left. But Ellen was wrought up to the last pitch of grief

and passion. Tears brought no relief. Convulsive weeping only exhausted her. In the extremity of her distress and despair, and in that lonely place, out of hearing of every one, she sobbed aloud, and even screamed, for almost the first time in her life; and these fits of violence were succeeded by exhaustion, during which she ceased to shed tears and lay quite still, drawing only long sobbing sighs now and then.

How long Ellen had lain there, or how long this would have gone on before her strength had been quite worn out, no one can tell. In one of these fits of forced quiet, when she lay as still as the rocks around her, she heard a voice close by say, "What is the matter, my child?"

The silver sweetness of the tone came singularly upon the tempest in Ellen's mind. She got up hastily, and brushing away the tears from her dimmed eyes, she saw a young lady standing there, and a face whose sweetness well matched the voice looking upon her with grave concern. She stood motionless and silent.

"What is the matter, my dear?"

The tone found Ellen's heart and brought the water to her eyes again, though with a difference. She covered her face with her hands. But gentle hands were placed upon hers and drew them away; and the lady sitting down on Ellen's stone, took her in her arms; and Ellen hid her face in the bosom of a better friend than the cold earth had been like to prove her. But the change overcame her; and the soft whisper, "Don't cry any more," made it impossible to stop crying. Nothing further was said for some time; the lady waited till Ellen grew calmer. When she saw her able to answer, she said gently,

"What does all this mean, my child? What troubles you? Tell me, and I think we can find a way to mend matters."

Ellen answered the tone of voice with a faint smile, but the words with another gush of tears.

"You are Ellen Montgomery, aren't you?"

"Yes ma'am."

"I thought so. This isn't the first time I have seen you; I have seen you once before."

Ellen looked up surprised.

"Have you ma'am?—I am sure I have never seen you."

"No, I know that. I saw you when you didn't see me. Where, do you think?"

"I can't tell, I am sure," said Ellen,—"I can't guess; I haven't seen you at aunt Fortune's, and I haven't been anywhere else."

"You have forgotten," said the lady. "Did you never hear of a little girl who went to take a walk once upon a time, and had an unlucky fall into a brook?—and then went to a kind old lady's house where she was dried and put to bed and went to sleep."

"O yes," said Ellen. "Did you see me there ma'am, and when I was asleep?"

"I saw you there when you were asleep; and Mrs. Van Brunt told me who you were and where you lived; and when I came here a little while ago I knew you again very soon. And I knew what the matter was too, pretty well; but nevertheless tell me all about it Ellen; perhaps I can help you."

Ellen shook her head dejectedly. "Nobody in this world can help me," she said.

"Then there's one in heaven that can," said the lady steadily. "Nothing is too bad for him to mend. Have you asked *his* help, Ellen?"

Ellen began to weep again. "Oh, if I could I would tell you all about it, ma'am," she said; "but there are so many things, I don't know where to begin, I don't know when I should ever get through."

"So many things that trouble you, Ellen?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I am sorry for that indeed. But never mind, dear, tell me what they are. Begin with the worst, and if I haven't time to hear them all now I'll find time another day. Begin with the worst."

But she waited in vain for an answer, and became distressed herself at Ellen's distress, which was extreme.

"Don't cry so, my child,—don't cry so," she said, pressing her in her arms. "What *is* the matter? hardly anything in this world is so bad it can't be mended. I think I know what troubles you so—it is that your dear mother is away from you, isn't it?"

"Oh no, ma'am!"—Ellen could scarcely articulate. But

struggling with herself for a minute or two, she then spoke again and more clearly.

"The worst is,—oh the worst is—that I meant—I meant—to be a good child, and I have been worse than ever I was in my life before."

Her tears gushed forth.

"But how, Ellen?" said her surprised friend after a pause. "I don't quite understand you. When did you 'mean to be a good child?' Didn't you always mean so? and what have you been doing?"

Ellen made a great effort and ceased crying; straightened herself; dashed away her tears as if determined to shed no more; and presently spoke calmly, though a choking sob every now and then threatened to interrupt her.

"I will tell you, ma'am. That first day I left mamma—when I was on board the steamboat and feeling as badly as I could feel, a kind, kind gentleman, I don't know who he was, came to me and spoke to me, and took care of me the whole day. O, if I could see him again! He talked to me a great deal; he wanted me to be a Christian; he wanted me to make up my mind to begin that day to be one; and ma'am, I did. I did resolve with my whole heart, and I thought I should be different from that time from what I had ever been before. But I think I have never been so bad in my life as I have been since then. Instead of feeling right I have felt wrong all the time, almost,—and I can't help it. I have been passionate and cross, and bad feelings keep coming, and I know it's wrong, and it makes me miserable. And yet, oh! ma'am, I haven't changed my mind a bit,—I think just the same as I did that day; I want to be a Christian more than anything else in the world, but I am not,—and what shall I do!"

Her face sank in her hands again.

"And this is your great trouble?" said her friend.

"Yes."

"Do you remember who said, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?'"

Ellen looked up inquiringly.

"You are grieved to find yourself so unlike what you would be. You wish to be a child of the dear Savior and to have your heart filled with his love, and to do what will

please him. Do you?—Have you gone to him day by day, and night by night, and told him so?—have you begged him to give you strength to get the better of your wrong feelings, and asked him to change you and make you his child?"

"At first I did, ma'am,"—said Ellen in a low voice.

"Not lately?'

"No, ma'am;" in a low tone still and looking down.

"Then you have neglected your Bible and prayer for some time past?"

Ellen hardly uttered, "Yes."

"Why, my child?"

"I don't know, ma'am," said Ellen weeping,—"that is one of the things that made me think myself so very wicked. I couldn't like to read my Bible or pray either, though I always used to before. My Bible lay down quite at the bottom of my trunk, and I even didn't like to raise my things enough to see the cover of it. I was so full of bad feelings I didn't feel fit to pray or read either."

"Ah! that is the way with the wisest of us," said her companion; "how apt we are to shrink most from our Physician just when we are in most need of him. But Ellen, dear, that isn't right. No hand but his can touch that sickness you are complaining of. Seek it, love, seek it. He will hear and help you, no doubt of it, in every trouble you carry simply and humbly to his feet;—he has *promised*, you know."

Ellen was weeping very much, but less bitterly than before; the clouds were breaking and light beginning to shine through.

"Shall we pray together now?" said her companion after a few minutes' pause.

"Oh, if you please, ma'am, do!" Ellen answered through her tears.

And they knelt together there on the moss beside the stone, where Ellen's head rested and her friend's folded hands were laid. It might have been two children speaking to their father, for the simplicity of that prayer; difference of age seemed to be forgotten, and what suited one suited the other. It was not without difficulty that the speaker carried it calmly through, for Ellen's sobs went nigh to check her more than once. When they rose Ellen silently sought her

friend's arms again, and laying her face on her shoulder and putting both arms round her neck, she wept still,—but what different tears! It was like the gentle rain falling through sunshine, after the dark cloud and the thunder and the hurricane have passed by. And they kissed each other before either of them spoke.

"You will not forget your Bible and prayer again, Ellen?"

"Oh no, ma'am."

"Then I am sure you will find your causes of trouble grow less. I will not hear the rest of them now. In a day or two I hope you will be able to give me a very different account from what you would have done an hour ago; but besides that it is getting late, and it will not do for us to stay too long up here; you have a good way to go to reach home. Will you come and see me to-morrow afternoon?"

"Oh yes ma'am, indeed I will!—if I can;—and if you will tell me where."

"Instead of turning up this little rocky path you must keep straight on in the road,—that's all; and it's the first house you come to. It isn't very far from here. Where were you going on the mountain?"

"Nowhere ma'am."

"Have you been any higher up than this?"

"No ma'am."

"Then before we go away I want to show you something. I'll take you over the Bridge of the Nose; it isn't but a step or two more; a little rough to be sure, but you mustn't mind that."

"What is the 'Bridge of the Nose,' ma'am?" said Ellen, as they left her resting-place, and began to toil up the path which grew more steep and rocky than ever.

"You know this mountain is called the Nose. Just here it runs out to a very thin sharp edge. We shall come to a place presently where you turn a very sharp corner to get from one side of the hill to the other; and my brother named it jokingly the Bridge of the Nose."

"Why do they give the mountain such a queer name?" said Ellen.

"I don't know, I am sure. The people say that from one point of view this side of it looks very like a man's nose; but I never could find it out, and have some doubt about the fact.

But now here we are! Just come round this great rock,—mind how you step, Ellen,—now look there!"

The rock they had just turned was at their backs, and they looked towards the west. Both exclaimed at the beauty before them. The view was not so extended as the one they had left. On the north and south the broken wavy outline of mountains closed in the horizon; but far to the west stretched an opening between the hills through which the setting sun sent his long beams, even to their feet. In the distance all was a golden haze; nearer, on the right and left the hills were lit up singularly, and there was a most beautiful mingling of deep hazy shadow and bright glowing mountain sides and ridges. A glory was upon the valley. Far down below at their feet lay a large lake gleaming in the sunlight; and at the upper end of it a village of some size showed like a cluster of white dots.

"How beautiful!" said the lady again. "Ellen dear,—he whose hand raised up those mountains and has painted them so gloriously is the very same One who has said, to you and to me, 'Ask and it shall be given you.'"

Ellen looked up; their eyes met; her answer was in that grateful glance.

The lady sat down and drew Ellen close to her. "Do you see that little white village yonder, down at the far end of the lake? that is the village of Carra-carra; and that is Carra-carra lake; that is where I go to church; you cannot see the little church from here. My father preaches there every Sunday morning."

"You must have a long way to go," said Ellen.

"Yes—a pretty long way, but it's very pleasant though. I mount my little gray pony, and he carries me there in quick time, when I will let him. I never wish the way shorter. I go in all sorts of weathers too, Ellen; Sharp and I don't mind frost and snow."

"Who is Sharp?" said Ellen.

"My pony. An odd name, isn't it. It wasn't of my choosing, Ellen, but he deserves it if ever pony did. He's a very cunning little fellow. Where do you go, Ellen? to Thirlwall?"

"To church, ma'am?—I do'nt go anywhere."

"Doesn't your aunt go to church?"

"She hasn't since I have been here."

"What do you do with yourself on Sunday?"

"Nothing ma'am; I don't know what to do with myself all the day long. I get tired of being in the house, and I go out of doors, and then I get tired of being out of doors and come in again. I wanted a kitten dreadfully, but Mr. Van Brunt said aunt Fortune would not let me keep one.

"Did you want a kitten to help you keep Sunday, Ellen?" said her friend smiling.

"Yes I did ma'am," said Ellen, smiling again;—"I thought it would be a great deal of company for me. I got very tired of reading all day long, and I had nothing to read but the Bible; and you know ma'am I told you I have been all wrong ever since I came here, and I didn't like to read that much."

"My poor child!" said the lady,—"you have been hardly bestead I think. What if you were to come and spend next Sunday with me? Don't you think I should do instead of a kitten?"

"O yes ma'am, I am sure of it," said Ellen clinging to her. "O I'll come gladly if you will let me,—and if aunt Fortune will let me; and I hope she will, for she said last Sunday I was the plague of her life."

"What did you do to make her say so?' said her friend gravely.

"Only asked her for some books ma'am."

"'Well my dear, I see I am getting upon another of your troubles, and we haven't time for that now. By your own account you have been much in fault yourself; and I trust you will find all things mend with your own mending. But now there goes the sun!—and you and I must follow his example."

The lake ceased to gleam, and the houses of the village were less plainly to be seen; still the mountain heads were as bright as ever. Gradually the shadows crept up their sides while the gray of evening settled deeper and deeper upon the valley.

"There," said Ellen,—"that's just what I was wondering at the other morning; only then the light shone upon the top of the mountains first and walked down, and now it leaves

the bottom first and walks up. I asked Mr. Van Brunt about it and he could not tell me. That's another of my troubles,—there's nobody that can tell me anything."

"Put me in mind of it to-morrow, and I'll try to make you understand it," said the lady, "but we must not tarry now. I see you are likely to find me work enough Ellen."

"I'll not ask you a question ma'am, if you don't like it," said Ellen earnestly.

"I do like, I do like," said the other. "I spoke laughingly, for I see you will be apt to ask me a good many. As many as you please, my dear."

"Thank you ma'am," said Ellen, as they ran down the hill; "they keep coming into my head all the while."

It was easier going down than coming up. They soon arrived at the place where Ellen had left the road to take the wood-path."

"Here we part," said the lady. "Good night!"

"Good night, ma'am."

There was a kiss and a squeeze of the hand, but when Ellen would have turned away the lady still held her fast.

"You are an odd little girl," said she. "I gave you liberty to ask me questions."

"Yes ma'am," said Ellen doubtfully.

"There is a question you have not asked me that I have been expecting. Do you know who I am?"

"No ma'am."

"Don't you want to know?"

"Yes ma'am, very much," said Ellen, laughing at her friend's look, "but mamma told me never to try to find out anything about other people that they didn't wish me to know, or that wasn't my business."

"Well I think this is your business decidedly. Who are you going to ask for when you come to see me to-morrow? Will you ask for 'the young lady that lives in this house?' or will you give a description of my nose and eyes and inches?"

Ellen laughed.

"My dear Ellen," said the lady changing her tone, "do you know you please me very much? For one person that shows herself well-bred in this matter there are a thousand I think that ask impertinent questions. I am very glad you are

an exception to the common rule. But dear Ellen I am quite willing you should know my name—it is Alice Humphreys. Now kiss me again and run home; it is quite, quite time; I have kept you too late. Good night, my dear! Tell your aunt I beg she will allow you to take tea with me to-morrow."

They parted; and Ellen hastened homewards, urged by the rapidly growing dusk of the evening. She trode the green turf with a step lighter and quicker than it had been a few hours before, and she regained her home in much less time than it had taken her to come from thence to the mountain. Lights were in the kitchen, and the table set; but though weary and faint she was willing to forego her supper rather than meet her aunt just then; so she stole quietly up to her room. She did not forget her friend's advice. She had no light; she could not read; but Ellen did pray. She did carry all her heart-sickness, her wants, and her woes, to that friend whose ear is always open to hear the cry of those who call upon him in truth; and then, relieved, refreshed, almost healed, she went to bed and slept sweetly.

CHAPTER XVI.

After long storms and tempests overblowne,
The sunne at length his ioyous face doth cleare;
So whenas fortune all her spight hath showne,
Some blissfull houres at last must needs appeare;
Else should afflicted wights oft-times despeire.

FAERIE QUEENE.

EARLY next morning Ellen awoke with a sense that something pleasant had happened. Then the joyful reality darted into her mind, and jumping out of bed she set about her morning work with a better heart than she had been able to bring to it for many a long day. When she had finished she went to the window. She had found out how to keep it open now, by means of a big nail stuck in a hole under the sash. It was very early, and in the perfect stillness the soft gurgle of the little brook came distinctly to her ear. Ellen leaned her arms on the window-sill, and tasted the morning air; almost wondering at its sweetness and at the loveliness of field and sky and the bright eastern horizon. For days and days all had looked dark and sad.

There were two reasons for the change. In the first place Ellen had made up her mind to go straight on in the path of duty; in the second place, she had found a friend. Her little heart bounded with delight and swelled with thankfulness at the thought of Alice Humphreys. She was once more at peace with herself, and had even some notion of being by and by at peace with her aunt; though a sad twinge came over her whenever she thought of her mother's letter.

"But there is only one way for me," she thought; "I'll do as that dear Miss Humphreys told me—it's good and early, and I shall have a fine time before breakfast yet to myself.

And I'll get up so every morning and have it!—that'll be the very best plan I can hit upon."

As she thought this she drew forth her Bible from its place at the bottom of her trunk; and opening it at hazard she began to read the 18th chapter of Matthew. Some of it she did not quite understand; but she paused with pleasure at the 14th verse. "That means me," she thought. The 21st and 22nd verses struck her a good deal, but when she came to the last she was almost startled.

"There it is again!" she said. "That is exactly what that gentleman said to me. I thought I was forgiven, but how can I be, for I feel I have not forgiven aunt Fortune."

Laying aside her book, Ellen kneeled down; but this one thought so pressed upon her mind that she could think of scarce anything else; and her prayer this morning was an urgent and repeated petition that she might be enabled "from her heart" to forgive her aunt Fortune "all her trespasses." Poor Ellen! she felt it was very hard work. At the very minute she was striving to feel at peace with her aunt, one grievance after another would start up to remembrance, and she knew the feelings that met them were far enough from the spirit of forgiveness. In the midst of this she was called down. She rose with tears in her eyes, and "what shall I do?" in her heart. Bowing her head once more she earnestly prayed that if she could not yet *feel* right towards her aunt, she might be kept at least from acting or speaking wrong. Poor Ellen! In the heart is the spring of action; and she found it so this morning.

Her aunt and Mr. Van Brunt were already at the table. Ellen took her place in silence, for one look at her aunt's face told her that no "good morning" would be accepted. Miss Fortune was in a particularly bad humour, owing among other things to Mr. Van Brunt's having refused to eat his breakfast unless Ellen were called. An unlucky piece of kindness. She neither spoke to Ellen nor looked at her; Mr. Van Brunt did what in him lay to make amends. He helped her very carefully to the cold pork and potatoes, and handed her the well-piled platter of griddle-cakes.

"Here's the first buckwheats of the season," said he,—"and I told Miss Fortune I warn't a going to eat one on 'em if you didn't come down to enjoy 'em along with us.

Take two—take two!—you want 'em to keep each other hot."

Ellen's look and smile thanked him, as following his advice she covered one generous "buckwheat" with another as ample.

"That's the thing! Now here's some prime Maple. You like 'em I guess, don't you?"

"I don't know yet—I have never seen any," said Ellen.

"Never seen buckwheats! why they're 'most as good as my mother's splitters. Buckwheat cakes and maple molasses,—that's food fit for a king, *I* think—when they're good; and Miss Fortune's is always first-rate."

Miss Fortune did not relent at all at this compliment.

"What makes you so white this morning?" Mr. Van Brunt presently went on;—"you aint well, be you?"

"Yes,"—said Ellen doubtfully,—I'm well—

"She's as well as I am, Mr. Van Brunt, if you don't go and put her up to any notions!" Miss Fortune said in a kind of choked voice.

Mr. Van Brunt hemmed, and said no more to the end of breakfast-time.

Ellen rather dreaded what was to come next, for her aunt's look was ominous. In dead silence the things were put away, and put up, and in course of washing and drying, when Miss Fortune suddenly broke forth.

"What did you do with yourself yesterday afternoon?"

"I was up on the mountain," said Ellen.

"What mountain?"

"I believe they call it the 'Nose.'"

"What business had you up there?"

"I hadn't any business there."

"What did you go there for?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing!—you expect me to believe that? you call yourself a truth-teller, I suppose?"

"Mamma used to say I was," said poor Ellen, striving to swallow her feelings.

"Your mother!—I dare say—mothers always are blind. I dare say she took everything you said for gospel!"

Ellen was silent, from sheer want of words that were pointed enough to suit her.

"I wish Morgan could have had the gumption to marry in his own country; but he must go running after a Scotch-woman! A Yankee would have brought up his child to be worth something. Give me Yankees!"

Ellen set down the cup she was wiping.

"You don't know anything about my mother," she said. "You oughtn't to speak so—it's not right."

"Why aint it right, I should like to know?" said Miss Fortune;—"this is a free country, I guess. Our tongues aint tied—we're all free here."

"I wish we were," muttered Ellen;—"I know what I'd do."

"What would you do?" said Miss Fortune.

Ellen was silent. Her aunt repeated the question in a sharper tone.

"I oughtn't to say what I was going to," said Ellen;—"I'd rather not.'

"I don't care," said Miss Fortune, "you began, and you shall finish it. I will hear what it was."

"I was going to say, if we were all free I would run away."

"Well that *is* a beautiful, well-behaved speech! I am glad to have heard it. I admire it very much. Now what were you doing yesterday up on the Nose? Please to go on wiping. There's a pile ready for you. What were you doing yesterday afternoon?"

Ellen hesitated.

"Were you alone or with somebody?"

"I was alone part of the time."

"And who were you with the rest of the time?"

"Miss Humphreys."

"Miss Humphreys!—what were you doing with her?"

"Talking."

"Did you ever see her before?"

"No ma'am."

"Where did you find her?"

"She found me, up on the hill."

"What were you talking abont?"

Ellen was silent.

"What were you taking about?" repeated Miss Fortune.

"I had rather not tell."

"And I had rather you *should* tell—so out with it."

"I was alone with Miss Humphreys," said Ellen; "and it is no matter what we were talking about—it doesn't concern anybody but her and me."

"Yes it does, it concerns me," said her aunt, "and I choose to know;—what were you talking about?"

Ellen was silent.

"Will you tell me?"

"No," said Ellen, low but resolutely.

"I vow you're enough to try the patience of Job! Look here," said Miss Fortune, setting down what she had in her hands,—"I *will* know! I don't care what it was, but you shall tell me or I'll find a way to make you. I'll give you such a ——"

"Stop! stop!" said Ellen wildly,—"you must not speak to me so! Mamma never did, and you have no *right* to! If mamma or papa were here you would not *dare* talk to me so."

The answer to this was a sharp box on the ear from Miss Fortune's wet hand. Half stunned, less by the blow than the tumult of feeling it roused, Ellen stood a moment, and then throwing down her towel she ran out of the room, shivering with passion, and brushing off the soapy water left on her face as if it had been her aunt's very hand. Violent tears burst forth as soon as she reached her own room,—tears at first of anger and mortification only; but conscience presently began to whisper, "You are wrong! you are wrong!"—and tears of sorrow mingled with the others.

"Oh," said Ellen, "why couldn't I keep still!—when I had resolved so this morning, why couldn't I be quiet!—But she ought not to have provoked me so dreadfully,—I couldn't help it." "You are wrong," said conscience again, and her tears flowed faster. And then came back her morning trouble—the duty and the difficulty of forgiving. Forgive her aunt Fortune!—with her whole heart in a passion of displeasure against her. Alas! Ellen began to feel and acknowledge that indeed all was wrong. But what to do? There was just one comfort, the visit to Miss Humphreys in the afternoon. "She will tell me," thought Ellen; "she will help me. But in the mean while?"

Ellen had not much time to think; her aunt called her

down and set her to work. She was very busy till dinner time, and very unhappy; but twenty times in the course of the morning did Ellen pause for a moment, and covering her face with her hands pray that a heart to forgive might be given her.

As soon as possible after dinner she made her escape to her room that she might prepare for her walk. Conscience was not quite easy that she was going without the knowledge of her aunt. She had debated the question with herself, and could not make up her mind to hazard losing her visit.

So she dressed herself very carefully. One of her dark merinos was affectionately put on; her single pair of white stockings; shoes, ruffle, cape,—Ellen saw that all was faultlessly neat, just as her mother used to have it; and the nice blue hood lay upon the bed ready to be put on the last thing, when she heard her aunt's voice calling.

"Ellen!—come down and do your ironing—right away, now! the irons are hot."

For one moment Ellen stood still in dismay; then slowly undressed, dressed again, and went down stairs.

"Come! you've been an age," said Miss Fortune; "now make haste; there aint but a handful; and I want to mop up."

Ellen took courage again; ironed away with right good will; and as there was really but a handful of things she had soon done, even to taking off the ironing blanket and putting up the irons. In the meantime she had changed her mind as to stealing off without leave; conscience was too strong for her; and though with a beating heart, she told of Miss Humphreys' desire and her half engagement.

"You may go where you like—I am sure I do not care what you do with yourself," was Miss Fortune's reply.

Full of delight at this ungracious permission, Ellen fled up stairs, and dressing much quicker than before, was soon on her way.

But at first she went rather sadly. In spite of all her good resolves and wishes, everything that day had gone wrong; and Ellen felt that the root of the evil was in her own heart. Some tears fell as she walked. Further from her aunt's house, however, her spirits began to rise; her foot fell lighter on the greensward. Hope and expectation quickened her steps; and when at length she passed the little

wood-path it was almost on a run. Not very far beyond that her glad eyes saw the house she was in quest of.

It was a large white house; not very white either, for its last dress of paint had grown old long ago. It stood close by the road, and the trees of the wood seemed to throng it round on every side. Ellen mounted the few steps that led to the front door and knocked; but as she could only just reach the high knocker, she was not likely to alarm anybody with the noise she made. After a great many little faint raps, which if anybody heard them might easily have been mistaken for the attacks of some rat's teeth upon the wainscot, Ellen grew weary of her fruitless toil and of standing on tiptoe, and resolved, though doubtfully, to go round the house and see if there was any other way of getting in. Turning the far corner, she saw a long low out-building or shed, jutting out from the side of the house. On the further side of this Ellen found an elderly woman, standing in front of the shed, which was there open and paved, and wringing some clothes out of a tub of water. She was a pleasant woman to look at, very trim and tidy, and a good-humored eye and smile when she saw Ellen. Ellen made up to her and asked for Miss Humphreys.

"Why where in the world did you come from?" said the woman. "I don't receive company at the back of the house."

"I knocked at the front door till I was tired," said Ellen, smiling in return.

"Miss Alice must ha' been asleep. Now honey, you have come so far round to find me, will you go a little further and find Miss Alice? Just go round this corner and keep straight along till you come to the glass door—there you'll find her. Stop!—maybe she's asleep; I may as well go along with you myself."

She wrung the water from her hands and led the way.

A little space of green grass stretched in front of the shed, and Ellen found it extended all along that side of the house like a very narrow lawn; at the edge of it shot up the high forest trees; nothing between them and the house but the smooth grass and a narrow worn footpath. The woods were now all brown stems, except here and there a superb hemlock and some scattered silvery birches. But the grass was

still green, and the last day of the Indian summer hung its soft veil over all; the foliage of the forest was hardly missed. They passed another hall door, opposite the one where Ellen had tried her strength and patience upon the knocker; a little further on they paused at the glass door. One step led to it. Ellen's conductress looked in first through one of the panes, and then opening the door motioned her to enter.

"Here you are, my new acquaintance," said Alice smiling and kissing her. "I began to think something was the matter, you tarried so late. We don't keep fashionable hours in the country, you know. But I'm very glad to see you. Take off your things and lay them on that settee by the door. You see I've a settee for summer and a sofa for winter; for here I am, in this room, at all times of the year; and a very pleasant room I think it, don't you?"

"Yes, indeed I do ma'am," said Ellen, pulling off her last glove.

"Ah, but wait till you have taken tea with me half a dozen times, and then see if you don't say it is pleasant. Nothing can be so pleasant that is quite new. But now come here and look out of this window, or door, whichever you choose to call it. Do you see what a beautiful view I have here? The wood was just as thick all along as it is on the right and left; I felt half smothered to be so shut in; so I got my brother and Thomas to take axes and go to work there; and many a large tree they cut down for me, till you see they opened a way through the woods for the view of that beautiful stretch of country. I should grow melancholy if I had that wall of trees pressing on my vision all the time; it always comforts me to look off, far away, to those distant blue hills."

"Aren't those the hills I was looking at yesterday?" said Ellen.

"From up on the mountain?—the very same; this is part of the very same view, and a noble view it is. Every morning, Ellen, the sun rising behind those hills shines in through this door and lights up my room; and in winter he looks in at that south window, so I have him all the time. To be sure if I want to see him set I must take a walk for it, but that isn't unpleasant; and you know we cannot have everything at once."

It was a very beautiful extent of woodland, meadow, and hill, that was seen picture-fashion through the gap cut in the forest;—the wall of trees on each side serving as a frame to shut it in, and the descent of the mountain, from almost the edge of the lawn, being very rapid. The opening had been skillfully cut; the effect was remarkable and very fine; the light on the picture being often quite different from that on the frame or on the hither side of the frame.

"Now Ellen," said Alice turning from the window, "take a good look at my room. I want you to know it and feel at home in it; for whenever you can run away from your aunt's this is your home,—do you understand?"

A smile was on each face. Ellen felt that she was understanding it very fast.

"Here, next the door, you see, is my summer settee; and in summer it very often walks out of doors to accommodate people on the grass-plat. I have a great fancy for taking tea out of doors Ellen, in warm weather; and if you do not mind a mosquito or two I shall be always happy to have your company. That door opens into the hall; look out and see, for I want you to get the geography of the house.—That odd-looking, lumbering, painted concern, is my cabinet of curiosities. I tried my best to make the carpenter man at Thirlwall understand what sort of a thing I wanted, and did all but show him how to make it; but as the southerners say, 'he hasn't made it right no how!' There I keep my dried flowers, my minerals, and a very odd collection of curious things of all sorts that I am constantly picking up. I'll show you them some day Ellen. Have you a fancy for curiosities?"

"Yes ma'am, I believe so."

"Believe so!—not more sure than that? Are you a lover of dead moths, and empty beetle-skins, and butterflies' wings, and dry tufts of moss, and curious stones, and pieces of ribbon-grass, and strange bird's nests? These are some of the things I used to delight in when I was about as old as you."

"I don't know ma'am," said Ellen. "I never was where I could get them."

"Weren't you! Poor child! Then you have been shut up to brick walls and paving stones all your life?"

"Yes ma'am, all my life."

"But now you have seen a little of the country,—don't you think you shall like it better?"

"O a great deal better!"

"Ah that's right. I am sure you will. On that other side, you see, is my winter sofa. It's a very comfortable resting-place I can tell you Ellen, as I have proved by many a sweet nap; and its old chintz covers are very pleasant to me, for I remember them as far back as I remember anything."

There was a sigh here; but Alice passed on and opened a door near the end of the sofa.

"Look in here, Ellen; this is my bed-room."

"O how lovely!" Ellen exclaimed.

The carpet covered only the middle of the floor; the rest was painted white. The furniture was common but neat as wax. Ample curtains of white dimity clothed the three windows, and lightly draped the bed. The toilet-table was covered with snow-white muslin, and by the toilet-cushion stood, late as it was, a glass of flowers. Ellen thought it must be a pleasure to sleep there.

"This," said Alice when they came out,—"between my door and the fire-place, is a cupboard. Here be cups and saucers, and so forth. In that other corner beyond the fire-place you see my flower-stand. Do you love flowers, Ellen?"

"I love them dearly, Miss Alice."

"I have some pretty ones out yet, and shall have one or two in the winter; but I can't keep a great many here; I haven't room for them. I have hard work to save these from frost. There's a beautiful daphne that will be out by-and-by, and make the whole house sweet. But here, Ellen, on this side between the windows, is my greatest treasure—my precious books. All these are mine.—Now my dear it is time to introduce you to my most excellent of easy chairs—the best things in the room, aren't they? Put yourself in that—now do you feel at home?"

"Very much indeed, ma'am," said Ellen laughing, as Alice placed her in the deep easy chair.

There were two things in the room that Alice had not mentioned, and while she mended the fire Ellen looked at them. One was the portrait of a gentleman, grave and good-

looking; this had very little of her attention. The other was the counter-portrait of a lady; a fine dignified countenance that had a charm for Ellen. It hung over the fireplace in an excellent light; and the mild eye and somewhat of a peculiar expression about the mouth bore such likeness to Alice, though older, that Ellen had no doubt whose it was.

Alice presently drew a chair close to Ellen's side, and kissed her.

"I trust my child," she said, "that you feel better to-day than you did yesterday?"

"O I do, ma'am,—a great deal better," Ellen answered.

"Then I hope the reason is that you have returned to your duty, and are resolved, not to be a Christian by-and-by, but to lead a Christian's life now?"

"I have resolved so ma'am,—I did resolve so last night and this morning,—but yet I have been doing nothing but wrong all to-day."

Alice was silent. Ellen's lips quivered for a moment, and then she went on,

"O ma'am, how I have wanted to see you to-day to tell me what I *should* do! I resolved and resolved this morning, and then as soon as I got down stairs I began to have bad feelings towards aunt Fortune, and I have been full of bad feelings all day; and I couldn't help it."

"It will not do to say that we cannot help what is wrong, Ellen.—What is the reason that you have bad feelings towards your aunt?"

"She don't like me, ma'am."

"But how happens that Ellen? I am afraid you don't like her."

"No ma'am, I don't to be sure; how can I?"

"Why cannot you, Ellen?"

"O I can't ma'am! I wish I could. But oh, ma'am, I should have liked her—I might have liked her, if she had been kind, but she never has. Even that first night I came she never kissed me, nor said she was glad to see me."

"That was failing in kindness certainly, but is she *un*kind to you, Ellen?"

"O yes ma'am, indeed she is. She talks to me, and talks to me, in a way that almost drives me out of my wits; and to-day she even struck me! She has no right to do it," said

Ellen, firing with passion,—"she has no *right* to!—and she has no right to talk as she does about mamma. She did it to-day, and she has done it before;—I can't bear it!—and I can't bear *her*! I can't *bear* her!"

"Hush, hush," said Alice, drawing the excited child to her arms, for Ellen had risen from her seat;—"you must not talk so Ellen;—you are not feeling right now."

"No ma'am, I am not," said Ellen coldly and sadly. She sat a moment, and then turning to her companion put both arms round her neck, and hid her face on her shoulder again; and without raising it she gave her the history of the morning.

"What has brought about this dreadful state of things?" said Alice after a few minutes. "Whose fault is it, Ellen?"

"I think it is aunt Fortune's fault," said Ellen raising her head; "I don't think it is mine. If she had behaved well to me I should have behaved well to her. I meant to, I am sure"

"Do you mean to say you do not think you have been in fault at all in the matter?"

"No ma'am—I do not mean to say that. I have been very much in fault—very often—I know that. I get very angry and vexed, and sometimes I say nothing, but sometimes I get out of all patience and say things I ought not. I did so to-day; but it is so very hard to keep still when I am in such a passion;—and now I have got to feel so towards aunt Fortune that I don't like the sight of her; I hate the very look of her bonnet hanging up on the wall. I know it isn't right; and it makes me miserable; and I can't help it, for I grow worse and worse every day;—and what shall I do?"

Ellen's tears came faster than her words.

"Ellen my child," said Alice after a while,—"there is but one way. You know what I said to you yesterday?"

"I know it, but dear Miss Alice, in my reading this morning I came to that verse that speaks about not being forgiven if we do not forgive others; and oh! how it troubles me; for I can't feel that I forgive aunt Fortune; I feel vexed whenever the thought of her comes into my head; and how can I behave right to her while I feel so?"

"You are right there, my dear; you cannot indeed; the heart must be set right before the life can be."

"But what shall I do to set it right?"

"Pray."

"Dear Miss Alice I have been praying all this morning that I might forgive aunt Fortune, and yet I cannot do it."

"Pray still, my dear," said Alice, pressing her closer in her arms,—pray still; if you are in earnest the answer will come. But there is something else you can do, and must do, Ellen, besides praying, or praying may be in vain."

"What do you mean, Miss Alice?"

"You acknowledge yourself in fault—have you made all the amends you can? Have you, as soon as you have seen yourself in the wrong, gone to your aunt Fortune and acknowledged it, and humbly asked her pardon?"

Ellen answered "no" in a low voice.

"Then my child your duty is plain before you. The next thing after doing wrong is to make all the amends in your power; confess your fault, and ask forgiveness, both of God and man. Pride struggles against it,—I see yours does,—but my child, 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.'"

Ellen burst into tears and cried heartily.

"Mind your own wrong doings my child, and you will not be half so disposed to quarrel with those of other people. But Ellen dear, if you will not humble yourself to this you must not count upon an answer to your prayer. 'If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee,'—what then?—'Leave there thy gift before the altar;' go first and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come."

"But is it so hard to forgive!" sobbed Ellen.

"Hard? yes it is hard when our hearts are so. But there is little love to Christ and no just sense of his love to us in the heart that finds it hard. Pride and selfishness make it hard; the heart full of love to the dear Saviour *cannot* lay up offences against itself."

"I have said quite enough," said Alice after a pause; "you know what you want, my dear Ellen, and what you ought to do. I shall leave you for a little while to change my dress, for I have been walking and riding all the morning. Make a good use of the time while I am gone."

Ellen did make good use of the time. When Alice re-

turned she met her with another face than she had worn all that day, humbler and quieter; and flinging her arms around her, she said.

"I will ask aunt Fortune's forgiveness;—I feel I can do it now."

"And how about *forgiving*, Ellen?"

"I think God will help me to forgive her," said Ellen; "I have asked him. At any rate I will ask her to forgive me. But oh Miss Alice! what would have become of me without you!"

"Don't lean upon me, dear Ellen; remember you have a better friend than I always near you; trust in him; if I have done you any good, don't forget it was he brought me to you yesterday afternoon."

"There's just one thing that troubles me now," said Ellen, —"mamma's letter. I am thinking of it all the time; I feel as if I should fly to get it!"

"We'll see about that. Cannot you ask your aunt for it?"

"I don't like to."

"Take care, Ellen; there is some pride there yet."

"Well I will try," said Ellen, "but sometimes, I know, she would not give it to me if I were to ask her. But I'll try, if I can."

"Well now to change the subject—at what o'clock did you dine to-day?"

"I don't know ma'am,—at the same time we always do, I believe."

"And that is twelve o'clock, isn't it?"

"Yes, ma'am, but I was so full of coming here and other things that I couldn't eat."

"Then I suppose you would have no objection to an early tea?"

"No ma'am,—whenever you please," said Ellen laughing.

"I shall please it pretty soon. I have had no dinner at all to-day Ellen; I have been out and about all the morning, and had just taken a little nap when you came in. Come this way and let me show you some of my housekeeping."

She led the way across the hall to the room on the opposite side; a large, well-appointed, and spotlessly neat kitchen. Ellen could not help exclaiming at its pleasantness.

"Why yes—I think it is. I have been in many a parlor

that I do not like as well. Beyond this is a lower kitchen where Margery does all her rough work; nothing comes up the steps that lead from that to this but the very nicest and daintiest of kitchen matters. Margery, is my father gone to Thirlwall?"

"No Miss Alice—he's at Carra-carra—Thomas heard him say he wouldn't be back early."

"Well I shall not wait for him. Margery if you will put the kittle on and see to the fire, I'll make some of my cakes for tea."

"I'll do it Miss Alice; it's not good for you to go so long without eating."

Alice now rolled up her sleeves above the elbows, and tying a large white apron before her, set about gathering the different things she wanted for her work,—to Ellen's great amusement. A white moulding-board was placed upon a table as white; and round it soon grouped the pail of flour. the plate of nice yellow butter, the bowl of cream, the sieve, tray, and sundry etceteras. And then, first sifting some flour into the tray, Alice began to throw in the other things one after another and toss the whole about with a carelessness that looked as if all would go wrong, but with a confidence that seemed to say all was going right. Ellen gazed in comical wonderment.

"Did you think cakes were made without hands?" said Alice, laughing at her look. "You saw me wash mine before I began."

"O I'm not thinking of that," said Ellen; "I am not afraid of your hands."

"Did you never see your mother do this?" said Alice, who was now turning and rolling about the dough upon the board in a way that seemed to Ellen curious beyond expression.

"No, never," she said. "Mamma never kept house, and I never saw anybody do it."

"Then your aunt does not let you into the mysteries of bread and butter-making?"

"Butter-making! Oh," said Ellen with a sigh, "I have enough of that!"

Alice now applied a smooth wooden roller to the cake, with such quickness and skill that the lump forthwith lay

spread upon the board in a thin even layer, and she next cut it into little round cakes with the edge of a tumbler. Half the board was covered with the nice little white things, which Ellen declared looked good enough to eat already, and she had quite forgotten all possible causes of vexation, past, present, or future,—when suddenly a large gray cat jumped upon the table, and coolly walking upon the moulding board planted his paw directly in the middle of one of his mistress's cakes.

"Take him off—O Ellen!" cried Alice,—"take him off! I can't touch him."

But Ellen was a little afraid.

Alice then gently tried to shove puss off with her elbow; but he seemed to think that was very good fun,—purred, whisked his great tail over Alice's bare arm, and rubbed his head against it, having evidently no notion that he was not just where he ought to be. Alice and Ellen were too much amused to try any violent method of relief, but Margery happily coming in seized puss in both hands and set him on the floor.

"Just look at the print of his paw in that cake," said Ellen.

"He has set his mark on it certainly. I think it is his now, by the right of possession if not the right of discovery."

"I think he discovered the cakes too," said Ellen laughing.

"Why yes. He shall have that one baked for his supper.

"Does he like cakes?"

"Indeed he does. He is very particular and delicate about his eating, is Captain Parry."

"Captain Parry!" said Ellen,—"is that his name?"

"Yes," said Alice laughing; "I don't wonder you look astonished Ellen. I have had that cat five years, and when he was first given me my brother Jack, who was younger then than he is now, and had been reading Captain Parry's Voyages, gave him that name and would have him called so. Oh, Jack!"—said Alice, half laughing and half crying.

Ellen wondered why. But she went to wash her hands, and when her face was again turned to Ellen it was unruffled as ever.

"Margery my cakes are ready," said she, "and Ellen and I are ready too."

"Very well Miss Alice—the kettle is just going to boil; you shall have tea in a trice. I'll do some eggs for you."

"Something—anything"—said Alice; "I feel one cannot live without eating. Come Ellen, you and I will go and set the tea-table."

Ellen was very happy arranging the cups and saucers and other things that Alice handed her from the cupboard; and when a few minutes after the tea and the cakes came in, and she and Alice were cosily seated at supper, poor Ellen hardly knew herself in such a pleasant state of things.

CHAPTER XVII.

The very sooth of it is, that an ill-habit has the force of an ill-fate.
L'Estrange.

"Ellen dear," said Alice as she poured out Ellen's second cup of tea, "have we run through the list of your troubles?"

"O no Miss Alice, indeed we haven't; but we have got through the worst."

"Is the next one so bad it would spoil our supper?"

"No," said Ellen, "it couldn't do that, but it's bad enough though; it's about my not going to school. Miss Alice, I promised myself I would learn so much while mamma was away, and surprise her when she came back, and instead of that I am not learning anything. I don't mean not learning *anything*," said Ellen correcting herself;—"but I can't do much. When I found aunt Fortune wasn't going to send me to school I determined I would try to study by myself; and I have tried; but I can't get along."

"Well now don't lay down your knife and fork and look so doleful," said Alice smiling; "this is a matter I can help you in. What are you studying?"

"Some things I can manage well enough," said Ellen, "the easy things; but I cannot understand my arithmetic without some one to explain it to me, and French I can do nothing at all with, and that is what I wanted to learn most of all; and often I want to ask questions about my history."

"Suppose," said Alice, "you go on studying by yourself as much and as well as you can, and bring your books up to me two or three times a week; I will hear and explain and answer questions to your heart's content, unless you should be too hard for me. What do you say to that?"

Ellen said nothing to it, but the color that rushed to her cheeks,—the surprised look of delight,—were answer enough.

"It will do then," said Alice; "and I have no doubt we shall untie the knot of those arithmetical problems very soon. But Ellen my dear I cannot help you in French, for I do not know it myself. What will you do about that?"

"I don't know ma'am; I am sorry."

"So am I, for your sake. I can help you in Latin, if that would be any comfort to you."

"It wouldn't be much comfort to me," said Ellen laughing; "mamma wanted me to learn Latin but I wanted to learn French a great deal more; I don't care about Latin except to please her."

"Permit me to ask if you know English?"

"O yes ma'am, I hope so; I knew that a great while ago."

"Did you? I am very happy to make your acquaintance then, for the number of young ladies who *do* know English is in my opinion remarkably small. Are you sure of the fact Ellen?"

"Why yes, Miss Alice."

"Will you undertake to write me a note of two pages that shall not have one fault of grammar, nor one word spelt wrong, nor anything in it that is not good English? You may take for a subject the history of this afternoon."

"Yes ma'am, if you wish it. I hope I can write a note that long without making mistakes."

Alice smiled.

"I will not stop to inquire," she said, "whether *that long* is Latin or French; but Ellen my dear, it is not English."

Ellen blushed a little, though she laughed too.

"I believe I have got into the way of saying that by hearing aunt Fortune and Mr. Van Brunt say it; I don't think I ever did before I came here."

"What are you so anxious to learn French for?"

"Mamma knows it, and I have often heard her talk French with a great many people; and papa and I always wanted to be able to talk it too; and mamma wanted me to learn it; she said there were a great many French books I ought to read."

"That last is true no doubt. Ellen I will make a bargain with you,—if you will study English with me I will study French with you."

"Dear Miss Alice," said Ellen caressing her, "I'll do it without that; I'll study anything you please."

"Dear Ellen I believe you would. But I should like to know it for my own sake; we'll study it together; we shall get along nicely I have no doubt; we can learn to read it at least, and that is the main point."

"But how shall we know what to call the words?" said Ellen doubtfully.

"That is a grave question," said Alice smiling. "I am afraid we should hit upon a style of pronunciation that a Frenchman would make nothing of. I have it!" she exclaimed clapping her hands,—"where there's a will there's a way, —it always happens so. Ellen, I have an old friend up on the mountain who will give us exactly what we want, unless I am greatly mistaken. We'll go and see her; that is the very thing!—my old friend Mrs. Vawse."

"Mrs. Vawse!" repeated Ellen;—"not the grandmother of that Nancy Vawse?"

"The very same. Her name is not Vawse, the country people call it so, and I being one of the country people have fallen into the way of it; but her real name is Vosier. She was born a Swiss, and brought up in a wealthy French family, as the personal attendant of a young lady to whom she became exceedingly attached. This lady finally married an American gentleman; and so great was Mrs. Vawse's love to her that she left country and family to follow her here. In a few years her mistress died; she married; and since that time she has been tossed from trouble to trouble;—a perfect sea of troubles;—till now she is left like a wreck upon this mountain top. A fine wreck she is! I go to see her very often, and next time I will call for you, and we will propose our French plan; nothing will please her better I know. By the way Ellen, are you as well versed in the other common branches of education as you are in your mother tongue?"

"What do you mean, Miss Alice?"

"Geography, for instance; do you know it well?"

"Yes, ma'am; I believe so; I am sure I have studied it till I am sick of it."

"Can you give me the boundaries of Great Thibet or Peru?"

Ellen hesitated.

"I had rather not try," she said,—"I am not sure. I can't remember those queer countries in Asia and South America half so well as Europe and North America."

"Do you know anything about the surface of the country in Italy or France; the character and condition of the people; what kind of climate they have, and what grows there most freely?"

"Why no, ma'am," said Ellen; "nobody ever taught me that."

"Would you like to go over the Atlas again, talking about all these matters, as well as the mere outlines of the countries you have studied before?"

"Oh yes, dearly!" exclaimed Ellen.

"Well, I think we may let Margery have the tea-things. But here is Captain's cake."

"O may I give him his supper!" said Ellen.

"Certainly. You must carve it for him; you know I told you he is very particular. Give him some of the egg too—he likes that. Now where is the Captain?"

Not far off; for scarcely had Alice opened the door and called him once or twice, when with a queer little note of answer he came hurriedly trotting in.

"He generally has his supper in the outer kitchen," said Alice,—"but I grant him leave to have it here to-night as a particular honor to him and you."

"How handsome he is! and how large!" said Ellen.

"Yes, he is very handsome, and more than that he is very sensible, for a cat. Do you see how prettily his paws are marked? Jack used to say he had white gloves on."

"And white boots too," said Ellen. "No, only one leg is white; pussy's boots aren't mates. Is he good-natured?"

"Very—if you don't meddle with him."

"I don't call that being good-natured," said Ellen laughing.

"Nor I; but truth obliges me to say the Captain does not permit anybody to take liberties with him. He is a character, Captain Parry. Come out on the lawn Ellen, and we will let Margery clear away."

"What a pleasant face Margery has," said Ellen, as the door closed behind them; "and what a pleasant way she

has of speaking. I like to hear her,—the words come out so clear, and I don't know how, but not like other people."

"You have a quick ear Ellen; you are very right. Margery had lived too long in England before she came here to lose her trick of speech afterwards. But Thomas speaks as thick as a Yankee, and always did."

"Then Margery is English?" said Ellen.

"To be sure. She came over with us twelve years ago for the pure love of my father and mother; and I believe now she looks upon John and me as her own children. I think she could scarcely love us more if we were so in truth. Thomas—you haven't seen Thomas yet, have you?"

"No."

"He is an excellent good man in his way, and as faithful as the day is long; but he isn't equal to his wife. Perhaps I am partial; Margery came to America for the love of us, and Thomas came for the love of Margery; there's a difference."

"But Miss Alice!"—

"What, Miss Ellen?"

"You said Margery came over *with you*?"

"Yes; is that what makes you look so astonished?"

"But then you are English too?"

"Well, what of that? you won't love me the less will you?"

"Oh no," said Ellen; "my own mother came from Scotland, aunt Fortune says."

"I am English born, Ellen, but you may count me half American if you like, for I have spent rather more than half my life here. Come this way Ellen, and I'll show you my garden. It is some distance off, but as near as a spot could be found fit for it."

They quitted the house by a little steep path leading down the mountain, which in two or three minutes brought them to a clear bit of ground. It was not large, but lying very prettily among the trees with an open view to the east and south-east. On the extreme edge and at the lower end of it was fixed a rude bench, well sheltered by the towering forest trees. Here Alice and Ellen sat down.

It was near sunset; the air cool and sweet; the evening light upon field and sky.

"How fair it is!" said Alice musingly; "how fair and

lovely! Look at those long shadows of the mountains, Ellen; and how bright the light is on the far hills. It won't be so long. A little while more, and our Indian summer will be over; and then the clouds, the frost, and the wind, and the snow. Well, let them come.

"I wish they wouldn't I am sure," said Ellen. "I am sorry enough they are coming."

"Why?—all seasons have their pleasures. I am not sorry at all; I like the cold very much."

"I guess you wouldn't, Miss Alice, if you had to wash every morning where I do."

"Why where is that?"

"Down at the spout."

"At the *spout*—what is that pray?

"The spout of water, ma'am, just down a little way from the kitchen door. The water comes in a little long, very long, trough from a spring at the back of the pig-field, and at the end of the trough, where it pours out, is the spout."

"Have you no conveniences for washing in your room?"

"Not a sign of such a thing ma'am. I have washed at the spout ever since I have been here," said Ellen, laughing in spite of her vexation.

"And do the pigs share the water with you?"

"The pigs? O no ma'am; the trough is raised up from the ground on little heaps of stones; they can't get at the water,—unless they drink at the spring, and I don't think they do that, so many big stones stand around it.

"Well Ellen, I must say that is rather uncomfortable, even without any danger of four-footed society."

"It isn't so bad just now," said Ellen, "in this warm weather, but in that cold time we had a week or two back, do you remember Miss Alice?—just before the Indian summer began?—oh, how disagreeable it was! Early in the morning, you know,—the sun scarcely up, and the cold wind blowing my hair and my clothes all about; and then that board before the spout, that I have to stand on, is always kept wet by the spattering of the water, and it's muddy besides and very slippery,—there's a kind of green stuff comes upon it; and I can't stoop down for fear of muddying myself; I have to tuck my clothes round me and bend over as well as I can, and fetch up a little water to my face in

the hollow of my hand, and of course I have to do that a great many times before I get enough. I can't help laughing," said Ellen, "but it isn't a laughing matter for all that."

"So you wash your face in your hands and have no pitcher but a long wooden trough?—Poor child! I am sorry for you; I think you must have some other way of managing before the snow comes."

"The water is bitter cold already," said Ellen, "it's the coldest water I ever saw. Mamma gave me a nice dressing-box before I came away, but I found very soon this was a queer place for a dressing-box to come to. Why, Miss Alice, if I take out my brush or comb I haven't any table to lay them on but one that's too high, and my poor dressing-box has to stay on the floor. And I haven't a sign of a bureau,—all my things are tumbling about in my trunk."

"I think if I were in your place I would not permit *that* at any rate," said Alice; "if my things were confined to my trunk I would have them keep good order there at least."

"Well so they do," said Ellen,—"pretty good order; I didn't mean 'tumbling about' exactly."

"Always try to say what you mean *exactly*."

"But now Ellen, love, do you know I must send you away? Do you see the sunlight has quitted those distant hills? and it will be quite gone soon. You must hasten home."

Ellen made no answer. Alice had taken her on her lap again, and she was nestling there with her friend's arms wrapped around her. Both were quite still for a minute.

"Next week, if nothing happens, we will begin to be busy with our books. You shall come to me Tuesday and Friday; and all the other days you must study as hard as you can at home, for I am very particular, I forewarn you."

"But suppose aunt Fortune should not let me come?" said Ellen without stirring.

"O she will. You need not speak about it; I'll come down and ask her myself, and nobody ever refuses me anything."

"I shouldn't think they would," said Ellen.

"Then don't you set the first example," said Alice laughing. "I ask you to be cheerful and happy and grow wiser and better every day."

"Dear Miss Alice!—How can I promise that?"

"Dear Ellen it is very easy. There is One who has promised to hear and answer you when you cry to him; he will make you in his own likeness again; and to know and love him and not be happy, is impossible. That blessed Saviour!"—said Alice,—"oh, what should you and I do without him Ellen?—'as rivers of waters in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land;'—how beautiful! how true! how often I think of that."

Ellen was silent, though entering into the feeling of the words.

"Remember him dear Ellen;—remember your best friend. Learn more of Christ, our dear Saviour, and you can't help but be happy. Never fancy you are helpless and friendless while you have him to go to. Whenever you feel wearied and sorry, flee to the shadow of that great rock; will you?—and do you understand me?"

"Yes ma'am,—yes ma'am," said Ellen, as she lifted her lips to kiss her friend. Alice heartily returned the kiss, and pressing Ellen in her arms said,

"Now Ellen, dear, you *must* go; I dare not keep you any longer. It will be too late now, I fear, before you reach home."

Quick they mounted the little path again, and soon were at the house; and Ellen was putting on her things.

"Next Tuesday remember,—but before that! Sunday,—you are to spend Sunday with me; come bright and early."

"How early?"

"O as early as you please—before breakfast—and our Sunday morning breakfasts aren't late, Ellen; we have to set off betimes to go to church."

Kisses and goodbyes; and then Ellen was running down the road at a great rate, for twilight was beginning to gather, and she had a good way to go.

She ran till out of breath; then walked awhile to gather breath; then ran again. Running down hill is a pretty quick way of traveling; so before very long she saw her aunt's house at a distance. She walked now. She had come all the way in good spirits, though with a sense upon her mind of something disagreeable to come; when she saw the house this disagreeable something swallowed up all her thoughts,

and she walked leisurely on, pondering what she had to do and what she was like to meet with in the doing of it.

"If aunt Fortune should be in a bad humor—and say something to vex me,—but I'll not be vexed. But it will be very hard to help it;—but I *will not* be vexed;—I have done wrong, and I'll tell her so, and ask her to forgive me;—it will be hard,—but I'll do it—I'll say what I ought to say, and then however she takes it I shall have the comfort of knowing I have done right." "But," said conscience, "you must not say it stiffly and proudly; you must say it humbly and as if you really felt and meant it." "I will," said Ellen.

She paused in the shed and looked through the window to see what was the promise of things within. Not good; her aunt's step sounded heavy and ominous; Ellen guessed she was not in a pleasant state of mind. She opened the door,—no doubt of it,—the whole air of Miss Fortune's figure, to the very handkerchief that was tied round her head, spoke displeasure.

"She isn't in a good mood," said Ellen, as she went up stairs to leave her bonnet and cape there;—"I never knew her to be good-humored when she had that handkerchief on."

She returned to the kitchen immediately. Her aunt was busied in washing and wiping the dishes.

"I have come home rather late," said Ellen pleasantly;—"shall I help you aunt Fortune?"

Her aunt cast a look at her.

"Yes, you may help me. Go and put on a pair of white gloves and a silk apron, and then you'll be ready."

Ellen looked down at herself. "O my merino! I forgot about that. I'll go and change it."

Miss Fortune said nothing, and Ellen went.

When she came back the things were all wiped, and as she was about to put some of them away, her aunt took them out of her hands, bidding her "go and sit down!"

Ellen obeyed and was mute; while Miss Fortune dashed round with a display of energy there seemed to be no particular call for, and speedily had everything in its place and all straight and square about the kitchen. When she was, as a last thing, brushing the crumbs from the floor into the fire she broke the silence again. The old grandmother

sat in the chimney corner, but she seldom was very talkative in the presence of her stern daughter.

"What did you come home for to-night? Why didn't you stay at Mr. Humphrey's?"

"Miss Alice didn't ask me."

"That means I suppose that you would if she had?"

"I don't know, ma'am; Miss Alice wouldn't have asked me to do anything that wasn't right."

"O no!—of course not;—Miss Alice is a piece of perfection; everybody says so; and I suppose you'd sing the same song who haven't seen her three times."

"Indeed I would," said Ellen; "I could have told that in one seeing. I'd do anything in the world for Miss Alice."

"Ay—I dare say—that's the way of it. You can show not one bit of goodness or pleasantness to the person that does the most for you and has all the care of you,—but the first stranger that comes along you can be all honey to them, and make yourself out too good for common folks, and go and tell great tales how you are used at home I suppose. I am sick of it!" said Miss Fortune, setting up the andirons and throwing the tongs and shovel into the corner in a way that made the iron ring again. "One might as good be a stepmother at once and done with it! Come mother, it's time for you to go to bed."

The old lady rose with the meekness of habitual submission, and went up stairs with her daughter. Ellen had time to bethink herself while they were gone, and resolved to lose no time when her aunt came back in doing what she had to do. She would fain have persuaded herself to put it off. "It is late," she said to herself, "it isn't a good time. It will be better to go to bed now and ask aunt Fortune's pardon to-morrow." But conscience said, "*first* be reconciled to thy brother."

Miss Fortune came down stairs presently. But before Ellen could get any words out her aunt prevented her.

"Come, light your candle and be off;—I want you out of the way; I can't do anything with half a dozen people about."

Ellen rose. "I want to say something to you first, aunt Fortune."

"Say it and be quick; I haven't time to stand talking."

"Aunt Fortune," said Ellen stumbling over her words,—

"I want to tell you that I know I was wrong this morning, and I am sorry, and I hope you'll forgive me."

A kind of indignant laugh escaped from Miss Fortune's lips.

"It's easy talking; I'd rather have acting. I'd rather see people mend their ways than stand and make speeches about them. Being sorry don't help the matter much."

"But I will try not to do so any more," said Ellen.

"When I see you don't I shall begin to think there is something in it. Actions speak louder than words. I don't believe in this jumping into goodness all at once."

"Well I will try not to, at any rate," said Ellen sighing.

"I shall be very glad to see it. What has brought you into this sudden fit of dutifulness and fine talking?"

"Miss Alice told me I ought to ask your pardon for what I had done wrong," said Ellen, scarce able to keep from crying; "and I know I did wrong this morning, and I did wrong the other day about the letter; and I am sorry, whether you believe it or no."

"Miss Alice told you, did she? So all this is to please Miss Alice. I suppose you were afraid your friend Miss Alice would hear of some of your goings on, and thought you had better make up with me. Is that it?"

Ellen answered, "No ma'am," in a low tone, but had no voice to say more.

"I wish Miss Alice would look after her own affairs, and let other people's houses alone. That's always the way with your pieces of perfection;—they're eternally finding out something that isn't as it ought to be among their neighbors. I think people that don't set up for being quite such great things get along quite as well in the world."

Ellen was strongly tempted to reply, but kept her lips shut.

"I'll tell you what," said Miss Fortune,—"if you want me to believe that all thistalk means something I'll tell you what you shall do,—you shall just tell Mr. Van Brunt to-morrow about it all, and how ugly you have been these two days, and let him know you were wrong and I was right. I believe he thinks you cannot do anything wrong, and I should like him to know it for once."

Ellen struggled hard with herself before she could speak; Miss Fortune's lips began to wear a scornful smile.

"I'll tell him!" said Ellen at length; "I'll tell him I was wrong, if you wish me to."

"I *do* wish it. I like people's eyes to be opened. It'll do him good I guess, and you too. Now have you anything more to say?"

Ellen hesitated;—the color came and went;—she knew it wasn't a good time, but how could she wait?

"Aunt Fortune," she said, "you know I told you I behaved very ill about that letter,—won't you forgive me?"

"Forgive you? yes, child; I don't care anything about it."

"Then will you be so good as to let me have my letter again?" said Ellen timidly.

"O I can't be bothered to look for it now; I'll see about it some other time; take your candle and go to bed now if you've nothing more to say."

Ellen took her candle and went. Some tears were wrung from her by hurt feeling and disappointment; but she had the smile of conscience, and as she believed of Him whose witness conscience is. She remembered that "great rock in a weary land," and she went to sleep in the shadow of it.

The next day was Saturday. Ellen was up early; and after carefully performing her toilet duties she had a nice long hour before it was time to go down stairs. The use she made of this hour had fitted her to do cheerfully and well her morning work; and Ellen would have sat down to breakfast in excellent spirits if it had not been for her promised disclosure to Mr. Van Brunt. It vexed her a little. "I told aunt Fortune,—that was all right; but why I should be obliged to tell Mr. Van Brunt I don't know. But if it convinces aunt Fortune that I am in earnest, and mean what I say?—then I had better."

Mr. Van Brunt looked uncommonly grave, she thought; her aunt, uncommonly satisfied. Ellen had more than half a guess at the reason of both; but make up her mind to speak she could not, during all breakfast time. She eat without knowing what she was eating.

Mr. Van Brunt at length, having finished his meal without saying a syllable, arose and was about to go forth, when Miss Fortune stopped him. "Wait a minute Mr. Van Brunt," she said, "Ellen has something to say to you. Go ahead, Ellen."

Ellen *felt* rather than saw the smile with which these words were spoken. She crimsoned and hesitated.

"Ellen and I had some trouble yesterday," said Miss Fortune, "and she wants to tell you about it."

Mr. Van Brunt stood gravely waiting.

Ellen raised her eyes, which were full, to his face. "Mr. Van Brunt," she said, "aunt Fortune wants me to tell you what I told her last night,—that I know I behaved as I ought not to her yesterday, and the day before, and other times."

"And what made you do that?" said Mr. Van Brunt.

"Tell him," said Miss Fortune coloring, "that you were in the wrong and I was in the right—then he'll believe it I suppose."

"I was wrong," said Ellen.

"And I was right,"—said Miss Fortune.

Ellen was silent. Mr. Van Brunt looked from one to the other.

"Speak," said Miss Fortune; "tell him the whole if you mean what you say."

"I can't," said Ellen.

"Why you said you were wrong," said Miss Fortune, "that's only half of the business; if you were wrong I was right; why don't you say so, and not make such a shilly-shally piece of work of it?"

"I said I was wrong," said Ellen, "and so I was; but I never said you were right aunt Fortune, and I don't think so."

These words though moderately spoken were enough to put Miss Fortune in a rage.

"What did I do that was wrong?" she said; "come, I should like to know. What was it Ellen? Out with it; say everything you can think of; stop and hear it Mr. Van Brunt; come Ellen; let's hear the whole!"

"Thank you ma'am, I've heerd quite enough," said that gentleman, as he went out and closed the door.

"And I have said too much," said Ellen. "Pray forgive me aunt Fortune. I shouldn't have said that if you hadn't pressed me so; I forgot myself a moment. I am sorry I said that."

"Forgot yourself!" said Miss Fortune; "I wish you'd forget yourself out of my house. Please to forget the place where

I am for to-day anyhow; I've got enough of you for one while. You had better go to Miss Alice and get a new lesson; and tell her you are coming on finely."

Gladly would Ellen indeed have gone to Miss Alice, but as the next day was Sunday she thought it best to wait. She went sorrowfully to her own room. "Why couldn't I be quiet?" said Ellen. "If I had only held my tongue that unfortunate minute! what possessed me to say that?"

Strong passion—strong pride,—both long unbroken; and Ellen had yet to learn that many a prayer and many a tear, much watchfulness, much help from on high, must be hers before she could be thoroughly dispossessed of these evil spirits. But she knew her sickness; she had applied to the Physician;—she was in a fair way to be well.

One thought in her solitary room that day drew streams of tears down Ellen's cheeks. "My letter—my letter! what shall I do to get you!" she said to herself. "It serves me right; I oughtn't to have got in a passion; oh I have got a lesson this time!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Tranquilitie
So purely sate there, that waves great nor small
Did ever rise to any height at all.

CHAPMAN.

THE Sunday with Alice met all Ellen's hopes. She wrote a very long letter to her mother giving the full history of the day. How pleasantly they had ridden to church on the pretty gray pony,—she half the way and Alice the other half, talking to each other all the while; for Mr. Humphreys had ridden on before. How lovely the road was, "winding about round the mountain, up and down," and with such a wide fair view, and "part of the time close along by the edge of the water." This had been Ellen's first ride on horseback. Then the letter described the little Carra-carra church—Mr. Humphreys' excellent sermon, "every word of which she could understand;" Alice's Sunday School, in which she was sole teacher, and how Ellen had four little ones put under *her* care; and told how while Mr. Humphreys went on to hold a second service at a village some six miles off, his daughter ministered to two infirm old women at Carra-carra,—reading and explaining the Bible to the one, and to the other, who was blind, repeating the whole substance of her father's sermon. "Miss Alice told me that nobody could enjoy a sermon better than that old woman, but she cannot go out, and every Sunday Miss Alice goes and preaches to her, she says." How Ellen went home in the boat with Thomas and Margery, and spent the rest of the day and the night also at the parsonage; and how polite and kind Mr. Humphreys had been. "He's a very grave-looking man indeed," said the letter, "and not a bit like Miss Alice; he is a great deal older than I expected."

This letter was much the longest Ellen had ever written in

her life; but she had set her heart on having her mother's sympathy in her new pleasures, though not to be had but after the lapse of many weeks and beyond a sad interval of land and sea. Still she must have it; and her little fingers traveled busily over the paper hour after hour, as she found time, till the long epistle was finished. She was hard at work at it Tuesday afternoon when her aunt called her down; and obeying the call, to her great surprise and delight she found Alice seated in the chimney corner and chatting away with her old grandmother, who looked remarkably pleased. Miss Fortune was bustling round as usual, looking at nobody, though putting in her word now and then.

"Come Ellen," said Alice, "get your bonnet; I am going up the mountain to see Mrs. Vawse, and your aunt has given leave for you to go with me. Wrap yourself up well, for it is not warm."

Without waiting for a word of answer, Ellen joyfully ran off.

"You have chosen rather an ugly day for your walk, Miss Alice."

"Can't expect pretty days in December Miss Fortune. I am only too happy it doesn't storm; it will by to-morrow, I think. But I have learned not to mind weathers."

"Yes, I know you have," said Miss Fortune. "You'll stop up on the mountain till supper-time I guess, won't you?"

"O yes; I shall want something to fortify me before coming home after such a long tramp. You see I have brought a basket along. I thought it safest to take a loaf of bread with me, for no one can tell what may be in Mrs. Vawse's cupboard, and to lose our supper is not a thing to be thought of."

"Well, have you looked out for butter too? for you'll find none where you're going. I don't know how the old lady lives up there, but it's without butter I reckon."

"I have taken care of that too, thank you Miss Fortune. You see I'm a far-sighted creature."

"Ellen," said her aunt, as Ellen now, cloaked and hooded, came in, "go into the buttery and fetch out one of them pumpkin pies to put in Miss Alice's basket."

"Thank you Miss Fortune," said Alice smiling, "I shall tell Mrs. Vawse who it comes from. Now my dear, let's be off; we have a long walk before us."

Ellen was quite ready to be off. But no sooner had she opened the outer shed door than her voice was heard in astonishment.

"A cat!—What cat is this? Miss Alice! look here;—here's the Captain I do believe."

"Here is the Captain indeed," said Alice. "O pussy, pussy, what have you come for!"

Pussy walked up to his mistress, and stroking himself and his great tail against her dress, seemed to say that he had come for her sake, and that it made no difference to him where she was going.

"He was sitting as gravely as possible," said Ellen, "on the stone just outside the door, waiting for the door to be opened. How could he have come here?"

"Why he has followed me," said Alice; "he often does; but I came quick and I thought I had left him at home today. This is too long an expedition for him. Kitty—I wish you had stayed at home."

Kitty did not think so; he was arching his neck and purring in acknowledgment of Alice's soft touch.

"Can't you send him back?" said Ellen.

"No my dear; he is the most sensible of cats no doubt, but he could by no means understand such an order. No, we must let him trot on after us, and when he gets tired I'll carry him; it won't be the first time by a good many."

They set off with a quick pace, which the weather forbade them to slacken. It was somewhat as Miss Fortune had said, an ugly afternoon. The clouds hung cold and gray, and the air had a raw chill feeling that betokened a coming snow. The wind blew strong too, and seemed to carry the chillness through all manner of wrappers. Alice and Ellen however did not much care for it; they walked and ran by turns, only stopping once in a while when poor Captain's uneasy cry warned them they had left him too far behind. Still he would not submit to be carried, but jumped down whenever Alice attempted it, and trotted on most perseveringly. As they neared the foot of the mountain they were somewhat sheltered from the wind, and could afford to walk more slowly.

"How is it between you and your aunt Fortune now?" said Alice.

"O we don't get on well at all Miss Alice, and I don't know exactly what to do. You know I said I would ask her pardon. Well I did, that same night after I got home, but it was very disagreeable. She didn't seem to believe I was in earnest, and wanted me to tell Mr. Van Brunt that I had been wrong. I thought that was rather hard; but at any rate I said I would; and next morning I did tell him so; and I believe all would have done well if I could only have been quiet; but aunt Fortune said something that vexed me, and almost before I knew it I said something that vexed her dreadfully. It was nothing very bad, Miss Alice, though I ought not to have said it; and I was sorry two minutes after, but I just got provoked; and wha' shall I do, for it's so hard to prevent it?"

"The only thing I know," said Alice with a slight smile, "is to be full of that charity which among other lovely ways of showing itself has this,—that it is 'not easily provoked.'"

"I am easily provoked," said Ellen.

"Then you know one thing at any rate that is to be watched and prayed and guarded against; it is no little matter to be acquainted with one's own weak points."

"I tried so hard to keep quiet that morning," said Ellen, "and if I only could have let that unlucky speech alone—but somehow I forgot myself, and I just told her what I thought."

"Which it is very often best not to do."

"I do believe," said Ellen, "aunt Fortune would like to have Mr. Van Brunt not like me."

"Well," said Alice,—"what then?"

"Nothing, I suppose, ma'am."

"I hope you are not going to lay it up against her?"

"No ma'am,—I hope not."

"Take care dear Ellen, don't take up the trade of suspecting evil; you could not take up a worse; and even when it is forced upon you, see as little of it as you can, and forget as soon as you can what you see. Your aunt, it may be, is not a very happy person, and no one can tell but those that are unhappy how hard it is not to be unamiable too. Return good for evil as fast as you can; and you will soon either have nothing to complain of or be very well able to bear it."

They now began to go up the mountain, and the path be-

came in places steep and rugged enough. "There is an easier way on the other side," said Alice, "but this is the nearest for us." Captain Parry now showed signs of being decidedly weary, and permitted Alice to take him up. But he presently mounted from her arms to her shoulder, and to Ellen's great amusement kept his place there, passing from one shoulder to the other, and every now and then sticking his nose up into her bonnet as if to kiss her.

"What *does* he do that for?" said Ellen.

"Because he loves me and is pleased," said Alice. "Put your ear close Ellen, and hear the quiet way he is purring to himself—do you hear?—that's his way; he very seldom purrs aloud."

"He's a very funny cat," said Ellen laughing.

"Cat!" said Alice,—"there isn't such a cat as this to be seen. He's a cat to be respected, my old Captain Parry. He is not to be laughed at Ellen, I can tell you."

The travelers went on with good will; but the path was so steep and the way so long that when about half way up the mountain they were fain to follow the example of their four-footed companion and rest themselves. They sat down on the ground. They had warmed themselves with walking, but the weather was as chill and disagreeable and gusty as ever; every now and then the wind came sweeping by, catching up the dried leaves at their feet and whirling and scattering them off to a distance,—winter's warning voice.

"I never was in the country before when the leaves were off the trees," said Ellen. "It isn't so pretty Miss Alice, do you think so?"

"So pretty? No, I suppose not, if we were to have it all the while; but I like the change very much."

"Do you like to see the leaves off the trees?"

"Yes—in the time of it. There's a beauty in the leafless trees that you cannot see in summer. Just look Ellen—no, I cannot find you a nice specimen here, they grow too thick; but where they have room the way the branches spread and ramify, or branch out again, is most beautiful. There's first the trunk—then the large branches—then those divide into smaller ones; and those part and part again into smaller and smaller twigs, till you are canopied as it were with a network of fine stems. And when the snow falls gently on them—O

Ellen winter has its own beauties. I love it all; the cold, and the wind, and the snow, and the bare forests, and our little river of ice. What pleasant sleigh-rides to church I have had upon that river. And then the evergreens,—look at them; you don't know in summer how much they are worth; wait till you see the hemlock branches bending with a weight of snow, and then if you don't say the winter is beautiful I'll give you up as a young lady of bad taste."

"I dare say I shall," said Ellen; "I am sure I shall like what you like. But Miss Alice, what makes the leaves fall when the cold weather comes?"

"A very pretty question Ellen, and one that can't be answered in a breath."

"I asked aunt Fortune the other day," said Ellen, laughing very heartily,—"and she told me to hush up and not be a fool; and I told her I really wanted to know, and she said she wouldn't make herself a simpleton if she was in my place; so I thought I might as well be quiet."

"By the time the cold weather comes, Ellen, the leaves have done their work and are no more needed. Do you know what work they have to do?—do you know what is the use of leaves?"

"Why for prettiness, I suppose," said Ellen, "and to give shade;—I don't know anything else."

"Shade is one of their uses, no doubt, and prettiness too; he who made the trees made them 'pleasant to the eyes' as well as 'good for food.' So we have an infinite variety of leaves; one shape would have done the work just as well for every kind of tree, but then we should have lost a great deal of pleasure. But Ellen the tree could not live without leaves. In the spring the thin sap which the roots suck up from the ground is drawn into the leaves; there by the help of the sun and air it is thickened and prepared in a way you cannot understand, and goes back to supply the wood with the various matters necessary for its growth and hardness. After this has gone on some time the little vessels of the leaves become clogged and stopped up with earthy and other matter; they cease to do their work any longer; the hot sun dries them up more and more, and by the time the frost comes they are as good as dead. That finishes them,

and they drop off from the branch that needs them no more. Do you understand all this?"

"Yes, ma'am, very well," said Ellen; "and it's exactly what I wanted to know, and very curious. So the trees couldn't live without leaves?"

"No more than you could without a heart and lungs."

"I am very glad to know that," said Ellen. "Then how is it with the evergreens, Miss Alice? Why don't their leaves die and drop off too?"

"They do; look how the ground is carpeted under that pine tree."

"But they stay green all winter, don't they?"

"Yes; their leaves are fitted to resist frost; I don't know what the people in cold countries would do else. They have the fate of all other leaves however; they live awhile, do their work, and then die; not all at once though; there is always a supply left on the tree. Are we rested enough to begin again?"

"I am," said Ellen; "I don't know about the Captain. Poor fellow! he's fast asleep. I declare it's too bad to wake you up, pussy. Haven't we had a pleasant little rest, Miss Alice? I have learnt something while we have been sitting here."

"*That* is pleasant, Ellen," said Alice, as they began their upward march;—"I would I might be all the while learning something."

"But you have been teaching, Miss Alice, and that's as good. Mamma used to say it is more blessed to give than to receive."

"Thank you, Ellen," said Alice smiling; "that ought to satisfy me certainly."

They bent themselves against the steep hill again and pressed on. As they rose higher they felt it grow more cold and bleak; the woods gave them less shelter, and the wind swept round the mountain-head and over them with great force, making their way quite difficult.

"Courage, Ellen!" said Alice as they struggled on; "we shall soon be there."

"I wonder," said the panting Ellen, as making an effort she came up alongside of Alice—"I wonder why Mrs. Vawse will live in such a disagreeable place."

"It is not disagreeable to her, Ellen; though I must say I should not like to have *too* much of this wind."

"But does she really like to live up here better than down below where it is warmer?—and all alone too?"

"Yes, she does. Ask her why, Ellen, and see what she will tell you. She likes it so much better that this little cottage was built on purpose for her near ten years ago, by a good old friend of hers, a connection of the lady whom she followed to this country."

"Well," said Ellen, "she must have a queer taste—that is all I can say."

They were now within a few easy steps of the house, which did not look so uncomfortable when they came close to it. It was small and low, of only one story, through it is true the roof ran up very steep to a high and sharp gable. It was perched so snugly in a niche of the hill that the little yard was completely sheltered with a high wall of rock. The house itself stood out more boldly and caught pretty well near all the winds that blew; but so, Alice informed Ellen, the inmate liked to have it.

"And that roof," said Alice,—"she begged Mr. Marshman when the cottage was building that the roof might be high and pointed; she said her eyes were tired with the low roofs of this country, and if he would have it made so it would be a great relief to them."

The odd roof Ellen thought was pretty. But they now reached the door, protected with a deep porch. Alice entered and knocked at the other door. They were bade to come in. A woman was there stepping briskly back and forth before a large spinning-wheel. She half turned her head to see who the comers were, then stopped her wheel instantly, and came to meet them with open arms.

"Miss Alice! Dear Miss Alice, how glad I am to see you."

"And I you, dear Mrs. Vawse," said Alice kissing her. "Here's another friend you must welcome for my sake—little Ellen Montgomery."

"I am very glad to see Miss Ellen," said the old woman, kissing her also; and Ellen did not shrink from the kiss, so pleasant were the lips that tendered it; so kind and frank the smile, so winning the eye; so agreeable the whole air of the person. She turned from Ellen again to Miss Alice.

"It's a long while that I have not seen you, dear,—not since you went to Mrs. Marshman's. And what a day you have chosen to come at last!"

"I can't help that," said Alice, pulling off her bonnet,—I couldn't wait any longer. I wanted to see you dolefully, Mrs. Vawse."

"Why my dear? what's the matter? I have wanted to see *you*, but not dolefully."

"That's the very thing Mrs. Vawse; I wanted to see you to get a lesson of quiet contentment."

"I never thought you wanted such a lesson Miss Alice. What's the matter?"

"I can't get over John's going away."

Her lip trembled and her eye was swimming as she said so. The old woman passed her hands over the gentle head and kissed her brow.

"So I thought—so I felt, when my mistress died; and my husband; and my sons, one after the other. But now I think I can say with Paul, 'I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.' I think so; maybe that I deceive myself; but they are all gone, and I am certain that I am content now."

"Then surely I ought to be," said Alice.

"It is not till one looses one's hold of other things and looks to Jesus alone that one finds how much he can do. 'There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother;' but I never knew all that meant till I had no other friends to lean upon;—nay, I should not say *no* other friends;—but my dearest were taken away, You have *your* dearest still, Miss Alice."

"Two of them," said Alice faintly;—"and hardly that now."

"I have not one," said the old woman,—"I have not one; but my home is in heaven, and my Saviour is there preparing a place for me. I know it—I am sure of it—and I can wait a little while, and rejoice all the while I am waiting. Dearest Miss Alice— none of them that trust in him shall be desolate;' don't you believe that?"

"I do surely, Mrs. Vawse," said Alice, wiping away a tear or two, "but I forget it sometimes; or the pressure of present pain is too much for all that faith and hope can do."

"It hinders faith and hope from acting—that is the trouble. 'They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.' I know that is true, of my own experience; so will you dear."

"I know it Mrs. Vawse—I know it all; but it does me good to hear you say it. I thought I should become accustomed to John's absence, but I do not at all; the autumn winds all the while seem to sing to me that he is away."

"My dear love," said the old lady, "it sorrows me much to hear you speak so; I would take away this trial from you if I could; but He knows best. Seek to live nearer to the Lord, dear Miss Alice, and he will give you much more than he has taken away."

Alice again brushed away some tears.

"I felt I must come and see you to-day," said she, "and you have comforted me already. The sound of your voice always does me good. I catch courage and patience from you I believe."

"'As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.' How did you leave Mr. and Mrs. Marshman? and has Mr. George returned yet?"

Drawing their chairs together, a close conversation began. Ellen had been painfully interested and surprised by what went before, but the low tone of voice now seemed to be not meant for her ear, and turning away her attention, she amused herself with taking a general survey.

It was easy to see that Mrs. Vawse lived in this room, and probably had no other to live in. Her bed was in one corner; cupboards filled the deep recesses on each side of the chimney, and in the wide fireplace the crane and the hooks and trammels hanging upon it showed that the bedroom and sitting-room was the kitchen too. Most of the floor was covered with a thick rag carpet; where the boards could be seen they were beautifully clean and white, and everything else in the room in this respect matched with the boards. The panes of glass in the little windows were clear and bright as panes of glass could be made; the hearth was clean swept up; the cupboard doors were unstained and unsoiled, though fingers had worn the paint off; dust was nowhere. On a little stand by the chimney corner lay a large Bible and another book; close beside stood a cushioned arm-chair. Some other apart-

ment there probably was where wood and stores were kept; nothing was to be seen here that did not agree with a very comfortable face of the whole. It looked as if one might be happy there; it looked as if somebody *was* happy there; and a glance at the old lady of the house would not alter the opinion. Many a glance Ellen gave her as she sat talking with Alice; and with every one she felt more and more drawn towards her. She was somewhat under the common size and rather stout; her countenance most agreeable; there was sense, character, sweetness in it. Some wrinkles no doubt were there too; lines deep-marked that spoke of sorrows once known. Those storms had all passed away; the last shadow of a cloud had departed; her evening sun was shining clear and bright towards the setting; and her brow was beautifully placid, not as though it never had been, but as if it never could be ruffled again. Respect no one could help feeling for her; and more than respect one felt would grow with acquaintance. Her dress was very odd, Ellen thought. It was not American, and what it was she did not know, but supposed Mrs. Vawse must have a lingering fancy for the costume as well as for the roofs of her fatherland. More than all her eye turned again and again to the face, which seemed to her in its changing expression winning and pleasant exceedingly. The mouth had not forgotten to smile, nor the eye to laugh; and though this was not often seen, the constant play of feature showed a deep and lively sympathy in all Alice was saying, and held Ellen's charmed gaze; and when the old lady's looks and words were at length turned to herself she blushed to think how long she had been looking steadily at a stranger.

"Little Miss Ellen, how do you like my house on the rock here?"

"I don't know ma'am," said Ellen; "I like it very much, only I don't think I should like it so well in winter."

"I am not certain that I don't like it then best of all. Why would you not like it in winter?"

"I shouldn't like the cold ma'am, and to be alone."

"I like to be alone, but cold? I am in no danger of freezing, Miss Ellen. I make myself very warm—keep good fires,—and my house is too strong for the wind to blow it away. Don't you want to go out and see my cow? I have

one of the best cows that ever you saw; her name is Snow; there is not a black hair upon her; she is all white. Come Miss Alice; Mr. Marshman sent her to me a month ago; she's a great treasure and worth looking at."

They went across the yard to the tiny barn or outhouse, where they found Snow nicely cared for. She was in a warm stable, a nice bedding of straw upon the floor, and plenty of hay laid up for her. Snow deserved it, for she was a beauty and a very well-behaved cow, letting Alice and Ellen stroke her and pat her and feel of her thick hide, with the most perfect placidity. Mrs. Vawse meanwhile went to the door to look out.

"Nancy ought to be home to milk her," she said; "I must give you supper and send you off. I've no feeling nor smell if snow isn't thick in the air somewhere; we shall see it here soon."

"I'll milk her," said Alice.

"I'll milk her!" said Ellen; "I'll milk her! Ah do let me; I know how to milk; Mr. Van Brunt taught me, and I have done it several times. May I? I should like it dearly."

"You shall do it surely my child," said Mrs. Vawse. "Come with me and I'll give you the pail and the milking stool."

When Alice and Ellen came in with the milk they found the kettle on, the little table set, and Mrs. Vawse very busy at another table.

"What are you doing Mrs. Vawse, may I ask?" said Alice.

"I'm just stirring up some Indian meal for you; I find I have not but a crust left."

"Please to put that away ma'am for another time. Do you think I didn't know better than to come up to this mountain-top without bringing along something to live upon while I am here? Here's a basket ma'am, and in it are divers things; I believe Margery and I between us have packed up enough for two or three suppers; to say nothing of Miss Fortune's pie. There it is—sure to be good you know; and here are some of my cakes that you like so much, Mrs. Vawse," said Alice as she went on pulling the things out of the basket,—"there is a bowl of butter—that's not wanted I see—and here is a loaf of bread; and that's all. Ellen, my

dear, this basket will be lighter to carry down than it was to bring up."

"I am glad of it I am sure," said Ellen; "my arm hasn't done aching yet, though I had it so little while."

"Ah, I am glad to hear that kettle singing," said their hostess. "I can give you good tea, Miss Alice; you'll think so I know, for it's the same Mr. John sent me. It is very fine tea; and he sent me a noble supply, like himself," continued Mrs. Vawse, taking some out of her little caddy. "I ought not to say I have no friends left; I cannot eat a meal that I am not reminded of two good ones. Mr. John knew one of my weak points when he sent me that box of Souchong."

The supper was ready, and the little party gathered round the table. The tea did credit to the judgment of the giver and the skill of the maker, but they were no critics that drank it. Alice and Ellen were much too hungry and too happy to be particular. Miss Fortune's pumpkin pie was declared to be very fine, and so were Mrs. Vawse's cheese and butter. Eating and talking went on with great spirit, their old friend seeming scarce less pleased or less lively than themselves. Alice proposed the French plan and Mrs. Vawse, entered into it very frankly; it was easy to see that the style of building and of dress to which she had been accustomed in early life were not the only things remembered kindly for old time's sake. It was settled they should meet as frequently as might be, either here or at the parsonage, and become good Frenchwomen with all convenient speed.

"Will you wish to walk so far to see me again, little Miss Ellen?"

"Oh yes ma'am!"

"You won't fear the deep snow, and the wind and cold, and the steep hill?"

"O no ma'am, I won't mind them a bit; but ma'am, Miss Alice told me to ask you why you loved better to live up here than down where it is warmer. I shouldn't ask if she hadn't said I might."

"Ellen has a great fancy for getting at the reason of everything, Mrs. Vawse," said Alice smiling.

"You wonder anybody should choose it, don't you Miss Ellen?" said the old lady.

"Yes ma'am, a little."

"I'll tell you the reason my child. It is for the love of my old home and the memory of my young days. Till I was as old as you are and a little older I lived among the mountains and upon them; and after that, for many a year, they were just before my eyes every day, stretching away for more than *one* hundred miles, and piled up one above another, fifty times as big as any you ever saw; these are only molehills to them. I loved them—oh how I love them still! If I have one unsatisfied wish," said the old lady turning to Alice, "it is to see my Alps again; but that will never be. Now Miss Ellen, it is not that I fancy when I get to the top of this hill that I am among my own mountains, but I can breathe better here than down in the plain. I feel more free; and in the village I would not live for gold, unless that duty bade me."

"But all alone so far from everybody," said Ellen.

"I am never lonely; and old as I am I don't mind a long walk or a rough road any more than your young feet do."

"But isn't it very cold?" said Ellen.

"Yes, it is very cold;—what of that? I make a good blazing fire, and then I like to hear the wind whistle."

"Yes, but you wouldn't like to have it whistling inside as well as out," said Alice. "I will come and do the listing and caulking for you in a day or two. Oh you have it done without me! I am sorry."

"No need to be sorry dear—I am glad; you don't look fit for any troublesome jobs."

"I am fit enough," said Alice. "Don't put up the curtains; I'll come and do it."

"You must come with a stronger face then," said her old friend; "have you wearied yourself with walking all this way?"

"I was a little weary," said Alice, "but your nice tea has made me up again."

"I wish I could keep you all night," said Mrs. Vawse looking out, "but your father would be uneasy. I am afraid the storm will catch you before you get home; and you aren't fit to breast it. Little Ellen too don't look as if she was made of iron. Can't you stay with me?"

"I must not—it wouldn't do," said Alice, who was hastily

putting on her things; "we'll soon run down the hill. But we are leaving you alone;—where's Nancy?"

"She'll not come if there's a promise of a storm," said Mrs. Vawse; "she often stays out a night."

"And leaves you alone!"

"I am never alone," said the old lady quietly; "I have nothing to fear; but I am uneasy about you dear. Mind my words; don't try to go back the way you came; take the other road; it's easier; and stop when you get to Mrs. Van Brunt's; Mr. Van Brunt will take you the rest of the way in his little wagon."

"Do you think it is needful?" said Alice doubtfully.

"I am sure it is best. Hasten down. Adieu mon enfant."

They kissed and embraced her and hurried out.

CHAPTER XIX.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sough;
The shortening winter day is near a close.
BURNS.

THE clouds hung thick and low; the wind was less than it had been. They took the path Mrs. Vawse had spoken of; it was broader and easier than the other, winding more gently down the mountain; it was sometimes indeed traveled by horses, though far too steep for any kind of carriage. Alice and Ellen ran along without giving much heed to anything but their footing,—down, down,—running and bounding, hand in hand, till want of breath obliged them to slacken their pace.

"Do you think it will snow?—soon?" asked Ellen.

"I think it will snow,—how soon I cannot tell. Have you had a pleasant afternoon?"

"Oh very!"

"I always have when I go there. Now Ellen there is an example of contentment for you. If ever a woman loved husband and children and friends Mrs. Vawse loved hers; I know this from those who knew her long ago; and now look at her. Of them all she has none left but the orphan daughter of her youngest son, and you know a little what sort of a child that is."

"She must be a very bad girl," said Ellen; "you can't think what stories she told me about her grandmother."

"Poor Nancy!" said Alice. "Mrs. Vawse has no money nor property of any kind, except what is in her house; but there is not a more independent woman breathing. She does all sorts of things to support herself. Now for instance, Ellen, if anybody is sick within ten miles round, the family are too happy to get Mrs. Vawse for a nurse. She is an admirable one. Then she goes out tailoring at the farmers'

houses; she brings home wool and returns it spun into yarn; she brings home yarn and knits it up into stockings and socks; all sorts of odd jobs. I have seen her picking hops; she isn't above doing anything, and yet she never forgets her own dignity. I think wherever she goes and whatever she is about, she is at all times one of the most truly ladylike persons I have ever seen. And everybody respects her; everybody likes to gain her good-will; she is known all over the country; and all the country are her friends."

"They pay her for doing these things, don't they?"

"Certainly; not often in money; more commonly in various kinds of matters that she wants,—flour, and sugar, and Indian meal, and pork, and ham, and vegetables, and wool,—anything; it is but a little of each that she wants. She has friends that would not permit her to earn another sixpence if they could help it, but she likes better to live as she does. And she is always as you saw her to-day—cheerful and happy, as a little girl."

Ellen was turning over Alice's last words and thinking that little girls were not *always* the cheerfullest and happiest creatures in the world, when Alice suddenly exclaimed, "It is snowing! Come Ellen, we must make haste now!"—and set off at a quickened pace. Quick as they might, they had gone not a hundred yards when the whole air was filled with the falling flakes, and the wind which had lulled for a little now rose with greater violence and swept round the mountain furiously. The storm had come in good earnest and promised to be no trifling one. Alice and Ellen ran on, holding each other's hands and strengthening themselves against the blast, but their journey became every moment more difficult. The air was dark with the thick-falling snow; the wind seemed to blow in every direction by turns, but chiefly against them, blinding their eyes with the snow and making it necessary to use no small effort to keep on their way. Ellen hardly knew where she went, but allowed herself to be pulled along by Alice, or as well pulled *her* along; it was hard to say which hurried most. In the midst of this dashing on down the hill Alice all at once came to a sudden stop.

"Where's the Captain?" said she.

"I don't know," said Ellen,—"I haven't thought of him since we left Mrs. Vawse's."

Alice turned her back to the wind and looked up the road they had come,—there was nothing but wind and snow there; how furiously it blew! Alice called, "Pussy!—"

"Shall we walk up the road a little way, or shall we stand and wait for him here?" said Ellen, trembling half from exertion and half from a vague fear of she knew not what.

Alice called again;—no answer, but a wild gust of wind and snow that drove past.

"I can't go on and leave him," said Alice; "he might perish in the storm." And she began to walk slowly back, calling at intervals, "Pussy!—kitty!—pussy!"—and listening for an answer that came not. Ellen was very unwilling to tarry, and nowise inclined to prolong their journey by going backwards. She thought the storm grew darker and wilder every moment.

"Perhaps Captain stayed up at Mrs. Vawse's," she said, "and didn't follow us down."

"No," said Alice,—"I am sure he did. Hark!—wasn't that he?"

"I don't hear anything," said Ellen, after a pause of anxious listening.

Alice went a few steps further.

"I hear him!" she said;—"I hear him! poor kitty!"—and she set off at a quick pace up the hill. Ellen followed, but presently a burst of wind and snow brought them both to a stand. Alice faltered a little at this, in doubt whether to go up or down; but then to their great joy Captain's far off cry was heard, and both Alice and Ellen strained their voices to cheer and direct him. In a few minutes he came in sight, trotting hurriedly along through the snow, and on reaching his mistress he sat down immediately on the ground without offering any caress; a sure sign that he was tired. Alice stooped down and took him up in her arms.

"Poor kitty!" she said, "you've done your part for to-day I think; I'll do the rest. Ellen, dear, it's of no use to tire ourselves out at once; we will go moderately. Keep hold of my cloak my child; it takes both of my arms to hold this big cat. Now never mind the snow; we can bear being blown about a little; are you very tired?"

"No," said Ellen,—"not very;—I am a little tired; but I don't care for that if we can only get home safe."

"There's no difficulty about that I hope. Nay, there may be some *difficulty*, but we shall get there I think in good safety after awhile. I wish we were there now, for your sake my child."

"Oh never mind me," said Ellen gratefully; "I am sorry for *you* Miss Alice; you have the hardest time of it with that heavy load to carry; I wish I could help you."

"Thank you my dear, but nobody could do that; I doubt if Captain would lie in any arms but mine."

"Let me carry the basket then," said Ellen,—"do, Miss Alice."

"No my dear, it hangs very well on my arm. Take it gently; Mrs. Van Brunt's isn't very far off; we shall feel the wind less when we turn."

But the road seemed long. The storm did not increase in violence, truly there was no need of that, but the looked-for turning was not soon found, and the gathering darkness warned them day was drawing towards a close. As they neared the bottom of the hill Alice made a pause.

"There's a path that turns off from this and makes a shorter cut to Mrs. Van Brunt's, but it must be above here; I must have missed it, though I have been on the watch constantly."

She looked up and down. It would have been a sharp eye indeed that had detected any slight opening in the woods on either side of the path, which the driving snow-storm blended into one continuous wall of trees. They could be seen stretching darkly before and behind them; but more than that,—where they stood near together and where scattered apart,—was all confusion, through that fast-falling shower of flakes.

"Shall we go back and look for the path?" said Ellen.

"I am afraid we shouldn't find it if we did," said Alice; "we should only lose our time and we have none to lose. I think we had better go straight forward."

"Is it much further this way than the other path we have missed?"

"A good deal—all of half-a-mile. I am sorry; but courage my child! we shall know better than to go out in snowy weather next time,—on long expeditions at least."

They had to shout to make each other hear, so drove the

snow and wind through the trees and into their very faces and ears. They plodded on. It was plodding; the snow lay thick enough now to make their footing uneasy, and grew deeper every moment; their shoes were full; their feet and ankles were wet; and their steps began to drag heavily over the ground. Ellen clung as close to Alice's cloak as their hurried traveling would permit; sometimes one of Alice's hands was loosened for a moment to be passed round Ellen's shoulders, and a word of courage or comfort in the clear calm tone cheered her to renewed exertion. The night fell fast; it was very darkling by the time they reached the bottom of the hill, and the road did not yet allow them to turn their faces towards Mrs. Van Brunt's. A wearisome piece of the way this was, leading them *from* the place they wished to reach. They could not go fast either; they were too weary and the walking too heavy. Captain had the best of it; snug and quiet he lay wrapped in Alice's cloak and fast asleep, little wotting how tired his mistress's arms were.

The path at length brought them to the long desired turning; but it was by this time so dark that the fences on each side of the road showed but dimly. They had not spoken for a while; as they turned the corner a sigh of mingled weariness and satisfaction escaped from Ellen's lips. It reached Alice's ear.

"What's the matter love?" said the sweet voice. No trace of weariness was allowed to come into it.

"I am so glad we have got here at last," said Ellen, looking up with another sigh, and removing her hand for an instant from its grasp on the cloak to Alice's arm.

"My poor child! I wish I could carry you too. Can you hold on a little longer?"

"O yes, dear Miss Alice; I can hold on."

But Ellen's voice was not so well guarded. It was like her steps, a little unsteady. She presently spoke again.

"Miss Alice ——— are you afraid?"

"I am afraid of your getting sick my child, and a little afraid of it for myself;—of nothing else. What is there to be afraid of?"

"It is very dark," said Ellen; "and the storm is so thick, —do you think you can find the way?"

"I know it perfectly; it is nothing but to keep straight on; and the fences would prevent us from getting out of the road. It is hard walking I know, but we shall get there by-and-by; bear up as well as you can dear. I am sorry I can give you no help but words. Don't you think a nice bright fire will look comfortable after all this?"

"O dear yes!" answered Ellen rather sadly.

"Are *you* afraid Ellen?"

"No, Miss Alice—not much—I don't like its being so dark, I can't see where I am going."

"The darkness makes our way longer and more tedious; it will do us no other harm love. I wish I had a hand to give you, but this great cat must have both of mine. The darkness and the light are both alike to our Father; we are in his hand; we are safe enough dear Ellen."

Ellen's hand left the cloak again for an instant to press Alice's arm in answer; voice failed at the minute. Then clinging anew as close to her side as she could get they toiled patiently on. The wind had somewhat lessened of its violence, and besides it blew not now in their faces, but against their backs, helping them on. Still the snow continued to fall very fast, and already lay thick upon the ground; every half hour increased the heaviness and painfulness of their march; and darkness gathered till the very fences could no longer be seen. It was pitch dark; to hold the middle of the road was impossible; their only way was to keep along by one of the fences; and for fear of hurting themselves against some outstanding post or stone it was necessary to travel quite gently. They were indeed in no condition to travel otherwise if light had not been wanting. Slowly and patiently, with painful care groping their way, they pushed on through the snow and the thick night. Alice could *feel* the earnestness of Ellen's grasp upon her clothes; and her close pressing up to her made their progress still slower and more difficult than it would otherwise have been.

"Miss Alice,"—said Ellen.

"What, my child?"

"I wish you would speak to me once in a while."

Alice freed one of her hands and took hold of Ellen's.

"I have been so busy picking my way along, I have neglected you, haven't I?"

"O no, ma'am. But I like to hear the sound of your voice sometimes, it makes me feel better."

"This is an odd kind of traveling, isn't it?" said Alice cheerfully;—"in the dark, and feeling our way along? This will be quite an adventure to talk about, won't it?"

"Quite," said Ellen.

"It is easier going this way, don't you find it so? The wind helps us forward."

"It helps me too much," said Ellen; "I wish it wouldn't be quite so very kind. Why, Miss Alice, I have enough to do to hold myself together sometimes. It almost makes me run, though I am so very tired."

"Well it is better than having it in our faces at any rate. Tired you are, I know, and must be. We shall want to rest all day to-morrow, shan't we?"

"Oh I don't know!" said Ellen sighing; "I shall be glad when we begin. How long do you think it will be, Miss Alice, before we get to Mrs. Van Brunt's?"

"My dear child I cannot tell you. I have not the least notion whereabouts we are. I can see no waymarks, and I cannot judge at all of the rate at which we have come.

"But what if we should have passed it in this darkness?" said Ellen.

"No, I don't think that," said Alice, though a cold doubt struck her mind at Ellen's words;—"I think we shall see the glimmer of Mrs. Van Brunt's friendly candle by-and-by."

But more uneasily and more keenly now she strove to see that glimmer through the darkness; strove till the darkness seemed to press painfully upon her eyeballs, and she almost doubted her being able to see any light if light there were; it was all blank thick darkness still. She began to question anxiously with herself which side of the house was Mrs. Van Brunt's ordinary sitting-room;—whether she should see the light from it before or after passing the house; and now her glance was directed often behind her, that they might be sure in any case of not missing their desired haven. In vain she looked forward or back; it was all one; no cheering glimmer of lamp or candle greeted her straining eyes. Hurriedly now from time to time the comforting words were spoken to Ellen,

for to pursue the long stretch of way that led onward from Mrs. Van Brunt's to Miss Fortune's would be a very serious matter; Alice wanted comfort herself.

"Shall we get there soon, do you think, Miss Alice?" said poor Ellen, whose wearied feet carried her painfully over the deepening snow. The tone of voice went to Alice's heart.

"I don't know, my darling,—I hope so," she answered, but it was spoken rather patiently than cheerfully. "Fear nothing, dear Ellen; remember who has the care of us; darkness and light are both alike to him; nothing will do us any real harm."

"How tired you must be, dear Miss Alice, carrying pussy!" Ellen said with a sigh.

For the first time Alice echoed the sigh; but almost immediately Ellen exclaimed in a totally different tone, "There's a light!—but it isn't a candle—it is moving about;—what is it? what is it, Miss Alice?"

They stopped and looked. A light there certainly was, dimly seen, moving at some little distance from the fence on the opposite side of the road. All of a sudden it disappeared.

"What is it?" whispered Ellen fearfully.

"I don't know, my love, yet; wait—"

They waited several minutes.

"What could it be?" said Ellen. "It was certainly a light,—I saw it as plainly as ever I saw anything;—what can it have done with itself—there it is again!—going the other way!"

Alice waited no longer, but screamed out, "Who's there?"

But the light paid no attention to her cry; it traveled on.

"Halloo!" called Alice again as loud as she could.

"Halloo!" answered a rough deep voice. The light suddenly stopped.

"That's he! that's he!" exclaimed Ellen in an ecstacy and almost dancing,—"I know it,—it's Mr. Van Brunt! it's Mr. Van Brunt!—oh, Miss Alice!——"

Struggling between crying and laughing Ellen could not stand it, but gave way to a good fit of crying. Alice felt the infection, but controlled herself, though her eyes watered as her heart sent up its grateful tribute; as well as she could she answered the halloo.

The light was seen advancing towards them. Presently it glimmered faintly behind the fence, showing a bit of the dark rails covered with snow, and they could dimly see the figure of a man getting over them. He crossed the road to where they stood. It was Mr. Van Brunt.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Van Brunt," said Alice's sweet voice; but it trembled a little.

"Oh, Mr. Van Brunt!" sobbed Ellen.

That gentleman, at first dumb with astonishment, lifted his lantern to survey them, and assure his eyes that his ears had not been mistaken.

"Miss Alice!—My goodness alive!—How in the name of wonder!—And my poor little lamb!—But what on 'arth, ma'am! you must be half dead. Come this way,—just come back a little bit,—why, where were you going, ma'am?"

"To your house, Mr. Van Brunt; I have been looking for it with no little anxiety, I assure you."

"Looking for it! Why how on 'arth! you wouldn't see the biggest house ever was built half a yard off such a plaguy night as this."

"I thought I should see the light from the windows, Mr. Van Brunt."

"The light from the windows! Bless my soul! the storm rattled so again the windows that mother made me pull the great shutters to. I won't have 'em shut again of a stormy night, that's a fact; you'd ha' gone far enough afore you'd ha' seen the light through them shutters."

"Then we had passed the house already, hadn't we?"

"Indeed had you, ma'am. I guess you saw my light, ha'n't you?"

"Yes, and glad enough we were to see it too."

"I suppose so. It happened so to-night—now that is a queer thing—I minded that I hadn't untied my horse; he's a trick of being untied at night and won't sleep well if he aint; and mother wanted me to let him alone 'cause of the awful storm, but I couldn't go to my bed in peace, till I had seen him to his'n. So that's how my lantern came to be going to the barn in such an awk'ard night as this."

They had reached the little gate, and Mr. Van Brunt with some difficulty pulled it open The snow lay thick upon the

neat brick walk which Ellen had trod the first time with wet feet and dripping garments. A few steps further and they came to the same door that had opened then so hospitably to receive her. As the faint light of the lantern was thrown upon the old latch and door posts, Ellen felt at home ; and a sense of comfort sank down into her heart which she had not known for some time.

CHAPTER XX.

True is, that whilome that good poet said,
The gentle minde by gentle deeds is knowne:
For a man by nothing is so well bewrayed
As by his manners, in which plaine is showne
Of what degree and what race he is growne.

FAIRIE QUEENE.

MR. VAN BRUNT flung open the door and the two wet and weary travelers stepped after him into the same cheerful comfortable looking kitchen that had received Ellen once before. Just the same, tidy, clean swept up, a good fire, and the same old red-backed chairs standing round on the hearth in most cozy fashion. It seemed to Ellen a perfect storehouse of comfort; the very walls had a kind face for her. There were no other faces however; the chairs were all empty. Mr. Van Brunt put Alice in one and Ellen in another, and shouted, "Mother!—here!"—muttering that she had taken herself off with the light somewhere. Not very far; for in half a minute answering the call Mrs. Van Brunt and the light came hurriedly in.

"What's the matter, 'Brahm?—who's this?—why 'taint Miss Alice! My gracious me!—and all wet!—oh, dear, dear! poor lamb! Why Miss Alice, dear, where have you been?—and if that aint my little Ellen! oh dear! what a fix you are in;—well darling, I'm glad to see you again a'most anyway."

She crossed over to kiss Ellen as she said this; but surprise was not more quickly alive than kindness and hospitality. She fell to work immediately to remove Alice's wet things, and to do whatever their joint prudence and experience might suggest to ward off any ill effects from the fatigue and exposure the wanderers had suffered; and while she was thus employed Mr. Van Brunt busied himself with Ellen, who

was really in no condition to help herself. It was curious to see him carefully taking off Ellen's wet hood (not the blue one) and knocking it gently to get rid of the snow; evidently thinking that ladies' things must have delicate handling. He tried the cloak next, but boggled sadly at the fastening of that, and at last was fain to call in help.

"Here Nancy!—where are you? step here and see if you can undo this here thing, whatever you call it; I believe my fingers are too big for it."

It was Ellen's former acquaintance who came forward in obedience to this call. Ellen had not seen before that she was in the room. Nancy grinned a mischievous smile of recognition as she stooped to Ellen's throat and undid the fastening of the cloak, and then shortly enough bade her "get up, that she might take it off!" Ellen obeyed, but was very glad to sit down again. While Nancy went to the door to shake the cloak Mr. Van Brunt was gently pulling off Ellen's wet gloves, and on Nancy's return he directed her to take off the shoes, which were filled with snow. Nancy sat down on the floor before Ellen to obey this order; and tired and exhausted as she was, Ellen felt the different manner in which her hands and feet were waited upon.

"How did you get into this scrape?" said Nancy; *this* was none of my doings anyhow. It'll never be dry weather Ellen where you are. I won't put on my Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes when I go a walking with you. You had ought to ha' been a duck or a goose, or something like that.—What's that for, Mr. Van Brunt!"

This last query, pretty sharply spoken, was in answer to a light touch of that gentleman's hand upon Miss Nancy's ear, which came rather as a surprise. He deigned no reply.

"You're a fine gentleman!" said Nancy tartly.

"Have you done what I gave you to do?" said Mr. Van Brunt coolly.

"Yes—there!" said Nancy, holding up Ellen's bare feet on one hand, while the fingers of the other secretly applied in ticklish fashion to the soles of them caused Ellen suddenly to start and scream.

"Get up!" said Mr. Van Brunt; Nancy didn't think best to disobey;—"Mother, ha'n't you got nothing you want Nancy to do?"

"Sally," said Mrs. Van Brunt, "you and Nancy go and fetch here a couple of pails of hot water,—right away."

"Go, and mind what you are about," said Mr. Van Brunt; "and after that keep out of this room and don't whisper again till I give you leave. Now Miss Ellen dear, how do you feel?"

Ellen said in words that she felt "nicely." But the eyes and the smile said a great deal more; Ellen's heart was running over.

"Oh she'll feel nicely directly, I'll be bound," said Mrs. Van Brunt; "wait till she gets her feet soaked, and then!——"

"I do feel nicely now," said Ellen. And Alice smiled in answer to their inquiries, and said if she only knew her father was easy there would be nothing wanting to her happiness.

The bathing of their feet was a great refreshment, and their kind hostess had got ready a plentiful supply of hot herb tea, with which both Alice and Ellen were well dosed. While they sat sipping this, toasting their feet before the fire, Mrs. Van Brunt and the girls meanwhile preparing their room, Mr. Van Brunt suddenly entered. He was cloaked and hatted and had a riding-whip in his hand.

"Is there any word you'd like to get home Miss Alice? I'm going to ride a good piece that way, and I can stop as good as not."

"To-night, Mr. Van Brunt!" exclaimed Alice in astonishment.

Mr. Van Brunt's silence seemed to say that to-night was the time and no other.

"But the storm is too bad," urged Alice. "Pray don't go till to-morrow."

"Pray don't, Mr. Van Brunt!" said Ellen.

"Can't help it—I've got business; must go. What shall I say ma'am?"

"I should be *very* glad," said Alice, "to have my father know where I am. Are you going very near the Nose?"

"Very near."

"Then I shall be greatly obliged if you will be so kind as to stop and relieve my father's anxiety. But how *can* you go in such weather? and so dark as it is."

"Never fear," said Mr. Van Brunt. "We'll be back in

half an hour, if 'Brahm and me don't come across a snow-drift a *leetle* too deep. Good night, ma'am." And out he went.

"'Back in half an hour,'" said Alice musing. "Why he said he had been to untie his horse for the night! He must be going on our account, I am sure, Ellen!"

"On *your* account," said Ellen smiling. "O I knew that all the time Miss Alice. I don't think he'll stop to relieve aunt Fortune's anxiety."

Alice sprang to call him back; but Mrs. Van Brunt assured her it was too late, and that she need not be uneasy, for her son "didn't mind the storm no more than a weather-board." 'Brahm and 'Brahm could go anywhere in any sort of a time. "He was a-going without speaking to you, but I told him he had better, for maybe you wanted to send some word particular. And your room's ready now dear, and you'd better go to bed and sleep as long as you can."

They went thankfully. "Isn't this a pleasant room?" said Ellen, who saw everything in rose-color; "and a nice bed? But I feel as if I could sleep on the floor to-night. Isn't it a'most worth while to have such a time, Miss Alice, for the sake of the pleasure afterwards?"

"I don't know Ellen," said Alice smiling; "I won't say that; though it *is* worth paying a price for to find how much kindness there is in some people's hearts. As to sleeping on the floor, I must say I never felt less inclined to it."

"Well I am tired enough too," said Ellen as they laid themselves down. "Two nights with you in a week! Oh those weeks before I saw you, Miss Alice!"

One earnest kiss for good night; and Ellen's sigh of pleasure on touching the pillow was scarcely breathed when sleep deep and sound fell upon her eyelids.

It was very late next morning when they awoke, having slept rather heavily than well. They crawled out of bed feeling stiff and sore in every limb; each confessing to more evil effects from their adventure than she had been aware of the evening before. All the rubbing and bathing and drinking that Mrs. Van Brunt had administered had been too little to undo what wet and cold and fatigue had done. But Mrs. Van Brunt had set her breakfast-table with everything her house could furnish that was nice; a bountifully spread

board it was. Mr. Humphreys was there too; and no bad feelings of two of the party could prevent that from being a most cheerful and pleasant meal. Even Mr. Humphreys and Mr. Van Brunt, two persons not usually given to many words, came out wonderfully on this occasion; gratitude and pleasure in the one, and generous feeling on the part of the other, untied their tongues; and Ellen looked from one to the other in some amazement to see how agreeable they could be. Kindness and hospitality always kept Mrs. Van Brunt in full flow; and Alice, whatever she felt, exerted herself and supplied what was wanting everywhere; like the transparent glazing which painters use to spread over the dead color of their pictures; unknown, it was she gave life and harmony to the whole. And Ellen in her enjoyment of everything and everybody, forgot or despised aches and pains, and even whispered to Alice that coffee was making her well again.

But happy breakfasts must come to an end, and so did this, prolonged though it was. Immediately after, the party whom circumstances had gathered for the first and probably the last time, scattered again; but the meeting had left pleasant effects on all minds. Mrs. Van Brunt was in general delight that she had entertained so many people she thought a great deal of, and particularly glad of the chance of showing her kind feelings towards two of the number. Mr. Humphreys remarked upon "that very sensible good-hearted man, Mr. Van Brunt, towards whom he felt himself under great obligation." Mr. Van Brunt said "the minister warn't such a grum man as people called him;" and moreover said "it was a good thing to have an education, and he had a notion to read more." As for Alice and Ellen, they went away full of kind feeling for every one and much love to each other. This was true of them before; but their late troubles had drawn them closer together and given them fresh occasion to value their friends.

Mr. Humphreys had brought the little one-horse sleigh for his daughter, and soon after breakfast Ellen saw it drive off with her. Mr. Van Brunt then harnessed his own and carried Ellen home. Ill though she felt, the poor child made an effort and spent part of the morning in finishing the long letter to her mother which had been on the stocks since Monday. The effort became painful towards the last; and the

aching limbs and trembling hand of which she complained were the first beginnings of a serious fit of illness. She went to bed that same afternoon and did not leave it again for two weeks. Cold had taken violent hold of her system; fever set in and ran high; and half the time little Ellen's wits were roving in delirium. Nothing however could be too much for Miss Fortune's energies; she was as much at home in a sick room as in a well one. She flew about with increased agility; was up stairs and down stairs twenty times in the course of the day, and kept all straight everywhere. Ellen's room was always the picture of neatness; the fire, the wood fire, was taken care of; Miss Fortune seemed to know by instinct when it wanted a fresh supply, and to be on the spot by magic to give it. Ellen's medicines were dealt out in proper time; her gruels and drinks perfectly well made and arranged with appetizing nicety on a little table by the bedside where she could reach them herself; and Miss Fortune was generally at hand when she was wanted. But in spite of all this there was something missing in that sick room,—there was a great want; and whenever the delirium was upon her Ellen made no secret of it. She was never violent; but she moaned, sometimes impatiently and sometimes plaintively, for her mother. It was a vexation to Miss Fortune to hear her. The name of her mother was all the time on her lips; if by chance her aunt's name came in, it was spoken in a way that generally sent her bouncing out of the room.

"Mamma," poor Ellen would say, "just lay your hand on my forehead, will you? it's so hot. Oh do, mamma!—where are you? Do put your hand on my forehead, won't you?—O do speak to me, why don't you, mamma? O why don't she come to me!"

Once when Ellen was uneasily calling in this fashion for her mother's hand, Miss Fortune softly laid her own upon the child's brow; but the quick sudden jerk of the head from under it told her how well Ellen knew the one from the other; and little as she cared for Ellen it was wormwood to her.

Miss Fortune was not without offers of help during this sick time. Mrs. Van Brunt, and afterwards Mrs. Vawse, asked leave to come and nurse Ellen; but Miss Fortune declared it was more plague than profit to her, and she

couldn't be bothered with having strangers about. Mrs. Van Brunt she suffered, much against her will, to come for a day or two: at the end of that Miss Fortune found means to get rid of her civilly. Mrs. Vawse she would not allow to stay an hour. The old lady got leave however to go up to the sick room for a few minutes. Ellen, who was then in a high fever, informed her that her mother was down stairs, and her aunt Fortune would not let her come up; she pleaded with tears that she might come, and entreated Mrs. Vawse to take her aunt away and send her mother. Mrs. Vawse tried to soothe her. Miss Fortune grew impatient.

"What on earth's the use," said she, "of talking to a child that's out of her head? she can't hear reason; that's the way she gets into whenever the fever's on her. I have the pleasure of hearing that sort of thing all the time. Come away, Mrs. Vawse, and leave her; she can't be better any way than alone, and I am in the room every other thing;—she's just as well quiet. Nobody knows," said Miss Fortune, on her way down the stairs,—"nobody knows the blessing of taking care of other people's children that ha'n't tried it. *I've* tried it, to my heart's content."

Mrs. Vawse sighed, but departed in silence.

It was not when the fever was on her and delirium high that Ellen most felt the want she then so pitifully made known. There were other times,—when her head was aching, and weary and weak she lay still there,—O how she longed then for the dear wonted face; the old quiet smile that carried so much of comfort and assurance with it; the voice that was like heaven's music; the touch of that loved hand to which she had clung for so many years! She could scarcely bear to think of it sometimes. In the still wakeful hours of night, when the only sound to be heard was the heavy breathing of her aunt asleep on the floor by her side, and in the long solitary day, when the only variety to be looked for was Miss Fortune's flitting in and out, and there came to be a sameness about that,—Ellen mourned her loss bitterly. Many and many were the silent tears that rolled down and wet her pillow; many a long drawn sigh came from the very bottom of Ellen's heart; she was too weak and subdued now for violent weeping. She wondered sadly why Alice did not come to see her; it was

another great grief added to the former. She never chose however to mention her name to her aunt. She kept her wonder and her sorrow to herself,—all the harder to bear for that. After two weeks Ellen began to mend, and then she became exceeding weary of being alone and shut up to her room. It was a pleasure to have her Bible and hymn-book lying upon the bed, and a great comfort when she was able to look at a few words; but that was not very often, and she longed to see somebody, and hear something besides her aunt's dry questions and answers.

One afternoon Ellen was sitting, alone as usual, bolstered up in bed. Her little hymn-book was clasped in her hand; though not equal to reading, she felt the touch of it a solace to her. Half dozing, half waking, she had been perfectly quiet for some time, when the sudden and not very gentle opening of the room door caused her to start and open her eyes. They opened wider than usual, for instead of her aunt Fortune it was the figure of Miss Nancy Vawse that presented itself. She came in briskly, and shutting the door behind her advanced to the bedside.

"Well!" said she,—"there you are! Why you look smart enough. I've come to see you."

"Have you?" said Ellen uneasily.

"Miss Fortune's gone out, and she told me to come and take care of you; so I'm a-going to spend the afternoon."

"Are you?" said Ellen again.

"Yes—aint you glad? I knew you must be lonely, so I thought I'd come."

There was a mischievous twinkle in Nancy's eyes. Ellen for once in her life wished for her aunt's presence.

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing," said Ellen.

"Nothing indeed! It's a fine thing to lie there and do nothing. You won't get well in a hurry, I guess, will you? You look as well as I do this minute. O I always knew you was a sham."

"You are very much mistaken," said Ellen indignantly;—"I have been very sick, and I am not at all well yet."

"Fiddle-de-dee! it's very nice to think so; I guess you're lazy. How soft and good those pillows do look to be sure.

Come, Ellen, try getting up a little. *I* believe you hurt yourself with sleeping; it'll do you good to be out of bed a while; come! get up!"

She pulled Ellen's arm as she spoke.

"Stop, Nancy, let me alone!" cried Ellen, struggling with all her force,—"I mustn't—I can't! I mustn't get up; what do you mean? I'm not able to sit up at all; let me go!"

She succeeded in freeing herself from Nancy's grasp.

"Well, you're an obstinate piece," said the other; "have your own way. But mind, I'm left in charge of you; is it time for you to take your physic?"

"I am not taking any," said Ellen.

"What are you taking?"

"Nothing but gruel and little things."

"'Gruel and little things;' little things means something good I s'pose. Well, is it time for you to take some gruel or one of the little things?"

"No, I 'don't want any."

"O that's nothing; people never know what's good for them; I'm your nurse now, and I'm going to give it to you when I think you want it. Let me feel your pulse—yes, your pulse says gruel is wanting. I shall put some down to warm right away."

"I sha'n't take it," said Ellen.

"That's a likely story! You'd better not say so. I rather s'pose you will if I give it to you. Look here, Ellen, you'd better mind how you behave; you're going to do just what I tell you. I know how to manage you; if you make any fuss I shall just tickle you finely," said Nancy, as she prepared a bed of coals, and set the tin cup of gruel on it to get hot,—"I'll do it in no time at all, my young lady—so you'd better mind."

Poor Ellen involuntarily curled up her feet under the bedclothes, so as to get them as far as possible out of harm's way. She judged the best thing was to keep quiet if she could; so she said nothing. Nancy was in great glee; with something of the same spirit of mischief that a cat shows when she has a captured mouse at the end of her paws. While the gruel was heating she spun round the room in quest of amusement; and her sudden jerks and flings from one place and thing to another had so much of lawlessness that Ellen was

in perpetual terror as to what she might take it into her head to do next.

"Where does that door lead to?"

"I believe that one leads to the garret," said Ellen.

"You *believe* so? why don't you say it does, at once?"

"I have not been up to see."

"You haven't! you expect me to believe that, I s'pose? I am not quite such a gull as you take me for? What's up there?"

"I don't know of course."

"Of course! I declare I don't know what you are up to exactly; but if you won't tell me I'll find out for myself pretty quick,—that's one thing."

She flung open the door and ran up; and Ellen heard her feet tramping overhead from one end of the house to the other; and sounds too of pushing and pulling things over the floor; it was plain Nancy was rummaging.

"Well," said Ellen, as she turned uneasily upon her bed, "it's no affair of mine; I can't help it, whatever she does. But oh! won't aunt Fortune be angry!"

Nancy presently came down with her frock gathered up into a bag before her.

"What do you think I have got here?" said she. "I s'pose you didn't know there was a basket of fine hickory nuts up there in the corner? Was it you or Miss Fortune that hid them away so nicely? I s'pose she thought nobody would ever think of looking behind that great blue chest and under the feather bed, but it takes me!—Miss Fortune was afraid of your stealing 'em, I guess, Ellen?"

"She needn't have been," said Ellen, indignantly.

"No, I s'pose you wouldn't take 'em if you saw 'em; you wouldn't eat 'em if they were cracked for you, would you?"

She flung some on Ellen's bed as she spoke. Nancy had seated herself on the floor, and using for a hammer a piece of old iron she had brought down with her from the garret she was cracking the nuts on the clean white hearth.

"Indeed I wouldn't!" said Ellen throwing them back; "and you oughtn't to crack them there Nancy,—you'll make a dreadful muss."

"What do you think I care?" said the other scornfully. She leisurely cracked and eat as many as she pleased of the

nuts, bestowing the rest in the bosom of her frock. Ellen watched fearfully for her next move. If she should open the little door and get among her books and boxes!

Nancy's first care however was the cup of gruel. It was found too hot for any mortal lips to bear, so it was set on one side to cool. Then taking up her rambling examination of the room, she went from window to window.

"What fine big windows! one might get in here easy enough. I declare Ellen, some night I'll set the ladder up against here, and the first thing you'll see will be me coming in. You'll have me to sleep with you before you think."

"I'll fasten my windows," said Ellen.

"No you won't. You'll do it a night or two maybe, but then you'll forget it. I shall find them open when I come. O I'll come!"

"But I could call aunt Fortune," said Ellen.

"No you couldn't, 'cause if you spoke a word I'd tickle you to death; that's what I'd do. I know how to fix you off. And if you did call her I'd just whap out of the window and run off with my ladder, and then you'd get a fine combing for disturbing the house. What's in this trunk?"

"Only my clothes and things," said Ellen.

"O goody! that's fine; now I'll have a look at 'em. That's just what I wanted, only I didn't know it. Where's the key? O here it is sticking in,—that's good!"

"O please don't!" said Ellen, raising herself on her elbow, "they're all in nice order and you'll get them all in confusion. Oh do let them alone!"

"You'd best be quiet or I'll come and see you," said Nancy; "I'm just going to look at everything in it, and if I find anything out of sorts, you'll get it.—What's this? ruffles I declare! aint you fine! I'll see how they look on me. What a plague! you haven't a glass in the room. Never mind,—I am used to dressing without a glass."

"Oh I wish you wouldn't," said Ellen, who was worried to the last degree at seeing her nicely done-up ruffles round Nancy's neck;—"they're so nice, and you'll muss them all up."

"Don't cry about it," said Nancy coolly, "I aint a going to eat 'em. My goodness! what a fine hood! aint that pretty."

The nice blue hood was turning about in Nancy's fingers,

and well looked at inside and out. Ellen was in distress for fear it would go on Nancy's head, as well as the ruffles round her neck; but it didn't; she flung it at length on one side, and went on pulling out one thing after another, strewing them very carelessly about the floor.

"What's here? a pair of dirty stocking, as I am alive. Aint you ashamed to put dirty stockings in your trunk?"

"They are no such thing," said Ellen, who in her vexation was in danger of forgetting her fear,—I've worn them but once."

"They've no business in here anyhow," said Nancy, rolling them up in a hard ball and giving them a sudden fling at Ellen. They just missed her face and struck the wall beyond. Ellen seized them to throw back, but her weakness warned her she was not able, and a moment reminded her of the folly of doing anything to rouse Nancy, who for the present was pretty quiet. Ellen lay upon her pillow and looked on, ready to cry with vexation. All her nicely stowed piles of white clothes were ruthlessly hurled out and tumbled about; her capes tried on; her summer dresses unfolded, displayed, criticized. Nancy decided one was too short; another very ugly; a third horribly ill made; and when she had done with each it was cast out of her way on one side or the other as the case might be.

The floor was littered with clothes in various states of disarrangement and confusion. The bottom of the trunk was reached at last, and then Nancy suddenly recollected her gruel, and sprang to it. But it had grown cold again.

"This won't do," said Nancy as she put it on the coals again,—"it must be just right; it'll warm soon, and then Miss Ellen you're agoing to take it, whether or no. I hope you won't give me the pleasure of pouring it down."

Meanwhile she opened the little door of Ellen's study closet and went in there, though Ellen begged her not. She pulled the door to, and stayed some time perfectly quiet. Not able to see or hear what she was doing, and fretted beyond measure that her work-box and writing-desk should be at Nancy's mercy, or even feel the touch of her fingers, Ellen at last could stand it no longer but threw herself out of the bed, weak as she was, and went to see what was going on. Nancy was seated quietly on the floor, examining with much

seeming interest the contents of the work-box; trying on the thimble, cutting bits of thread with the scissors, and marking the ends of the spools; with whatever like pieces of mischief her restless spirit could divise; but when Ellen opened the door she put the box from her and started up.

"My goodness me!" said she, "this'll never do. What are you out here for? you'll catch your death with those dear little bare feet, and we shall have the mischief to pay."

As she said this she caught up Ellen in her arms as if she had been a baby and carried her back to the bed, where she laid her with two or three little shakes, and then proceeded to spread up the clothes and tuck her in all round. She then ran for the gruel. Ellen was in great question whether to give way to tears or vexation; but with some difficulty determined upon vexation as the best plan. Nancy prepared the gruel to her liking, and brought it to the bedside; but to get it swallowed was another matter. Nancy was resolved Ellen should take it. Ellen had less strength but quite as much obstinacy as her enemy, and she was equally resolved not to drink a drop. Between laughing on Nancy's part, and very serious anger on Ellen's, a struggle ensued. Nancy tried to force it down, but Ellen's shut teeth were as firm as a vice, and the end was that two-thirds were bestowed on the sheet. Ellen burst into tears. Nancy laughed.

"Well I *do* think," said she, "you are one of the hardest customers ever I came across. I shouldn't want to have the managing of you when you get a little bigger. O the way Miss Fortune will look when she comes in here will be a caution! O what fun!"

Nancy shouted and clapped her hands. "Come stop crying!" said she, "what a baby you are! what are you crying for? come stop!—I'll make you laugh if you don't."

Two or three little applications of Nancy's fingers made her words good, but laughing was mixed with crying, and Ellen writhed in hysterics. Just then came a little knock at the door. Ellen did not hear it, but it quieted Nancy. She stood still a moment; and then as the knock was repeated she called out boldly "come in!" Ellen raised her head "to see who there might be;" and great was the surprise of both and the joy of one as the tall form and broad shoulders of Mr. Van Brunt presented themselves.

"Oh Mr. Van Brunt," sobbed Ellen, "I am so glad to see you! won't you please send Nancy away?"

"What are you doing here?" said the astonished Dutchman.

"Look and see, Mr. Van Brunt," said Nancy with a smile of mischief's own curling; "you won't be long finding out I guess."

"Take yourself off, and don't let me hear of your being caught here again."

"I'll go when I'm ready, thank you," said Nancy; "and as to the rest I haven't been caught the first time yet; I don't know what you mean."

She sprang as she finished her sentence, for Mr. Van Brunt made a sudden movement to catch her then and there. He was foiled; and then began a running chase round the room, in the course of which Nancy dodged, pushed, and sprang, with a power of squeezing by impassables and overleaping impossibilities, that to say the least of it was remarkable. The room was too small for her and she was caught at last.

"I vow!" said Mr. Van Brunt as he pinioned her hands, I should like to see you play blind man's buff for once, if I waren't the blind man."

"How'd you see me if you was?" said Nancy scornfully.

"Now Miss Ellen," said Mr. Van Brunt, as he brought her to Ellen's bedside, "here she is safe; what shall I do with her?"

"If you will only send her away, and not let her come back, Mr. Van Brunt!" said Ellen, "I'll be so much obliged to you!"

"Let me go!" said Nancy. "I declare you're a real mean Dutchman, Mr. Van Brunt."

He took both her hands in one, and laid the other lightly over her ears.

"I'll let you go," said he. "Now don't you be caught here again if you know what is good for yourself."

He saw Miss Nancy out of the door, and then came back to Ellen, who was crying heartily again from nervous vexation.

"She's gone," said he. "What has that wicked thing been doing, Miss Ellen? what's the matter with you?"

"Oh, Mr. Van Brunt," said Ellen, "you can't think how

she has worried me; she has been here this great while; just look at all my things on the floor, and that isn't the half."

Mr. Van Brunt gave a long whistle as his eye surveyed the tokens of Miss Nancy's mischief-making, over and through which both she and himself had been chasing at full speed, making the state of matters rather worse than it was before.

"I do say," said he slowly, "that is too bad. I'd fix them up again for you, Miss Ellen, if I knew how; but my hands are a'most as clumsy as my feet, and I see the marks of them there; it's too bad I declare; I didn't know what I was going on."

"Never mind, Mr. Van Brunt," said Ellen,—"I don't mind what you've done a bit. I'm *so* glad to see you!"

She put out her little hand to him as she spoke. He took it in his own silently, but though he said and showed nothing of it, Ellen's look and tone of affection thrilled his heart with pleasure.

"How do you do?" said he kindly.

"I'm a great deal better," said Ellen. "Sit down, won't you, Mr. Van Brunt? I want to see you a little."

Horses wouldn't have drawn him away after that. He sat down.

"Aint you going to be up again some of these days?" said he.

"Oh yes, I hope so," said Ellen sighing; "I am very tired of lying here."

He looked round the room; got up and mended the fire; then came and sat down again.

"I was up yesterday for a minute," said Ellen, "but the chair tired me so I was glad to get back to bed again."

It was no wonder; harder and straighter-backed chairs never were invented. Probably Mr. Van Brunt thought so.

"Wouldn't you like to have a rocking-cheer?" said he suddenly, as if a bright thought had struck him.

"Oh yes, how much I should!" said Ellen, with another long drawn breath, "but there isn't such a thing in the house that ever I saw."

"Ay but there is in other houses though," said Mr. Van Brunt, with as near an approach to a smile as his lips commonly made;—"We'll see!"

Ellen smiled more broadly. "But don't you give yourself any trouble for me," said she.

"Trouble indeed!" said Mr. Van Brunt; "I don't know anything about that. How came that wicked thing up here to plague you?"

"She said aunt Fortune left her to take care of me."

"That's one of her lies. Your aunt's gone out, I know; but she's a trifle wiser than to do such a thing as that. She has plagued you badly, ha'n't she?"

He might have thought so. The color which excitement brought into Ellen's face had faded away, and she had settled herself back against her pillow with an expression of weakness and weariness that the strong man saw and felt.

"What is there I can do for you?" said he, with a gentleness that seemed almost strange from such lips.

"If you would," said Ellen faintly,—"if you *could* be so kind as to read me a hymn?—I should be so glad. I've had nobody to read to me."

Her hand put the little book towards him as she said so.

Mr. Van Brunt would vastly rather any one had asked him to plough an acre. He was to the full as much confounded as poor Ellen had once been at a request of his. He hesitated, and looked towards Ellen wishing for an excuse. But the pale little face that lay there against the pillow,—the drooping eyelids,—the meek helpless look of the little child, put all excuses out of his head; and though he would have chosen to do almost anything else, he took the book and asked her "Where?" She said anywhere; and he took the first he saw.

"Poor, weak, and worthless though I am,
I have a rich almighty friend;
Jesus the Saviour is his name,
He freely loves, and without end."

"Oh," said Ellen with a sigh of pleasure, and folding her hands on her breast,—"how lovely that is!"

He stopped and looked at her a moment, and then went on with increased gravity.

"He ransom'd me from hell with blood,
And by his pow'r my foes controll'd;
He found me wand'ring far from God,
And brought me to his chosen fold."

"Fold?" said Ellen, opening her eyes; "what is that?"

"It's where sheep are penned, aint it?" said Mr. Van Brunt after a pause.

"Oh yes!" said Ellen, "that's it; I remember; that's like what he said, 'I am the good shepherd,' and 'the Lord is my shepherd;' I know now. Go on, please."

He finished the hymn without more interruption. Looking again towards Ellen, he was surprised to see several large tears finding their way down her cheeks from under the wet eyelash. But she quickly wiped them away.

"What do you read them things for," said he, "if they make you feel bad."

"Feel bad!" said Ellen. "Oh they don't; they make me happy; I love them dearly. I never read that one before. You can't think how much I am obliged to you for reading it to me. Will you let me see where it is?"

He gave it her.

"Yes there's his mark!" said Ellen with sparkling eyes. "Now Mr. Van Brunt would you be so very good as to read it once more?"

He obeyed. It was easier this time. She listened as before with closed eyes, but the color came and went once or twice.

"Thank you very much," she said, when he had done. "Are you going?"

"I must; I have some things to look after."

She held his hand still.

"Mr. Van Brunt,—don't *you* love hymns?"

"I don't know much about 'em Miss Ellen."

"Mr. Van Brunt, are you one of that fold?"

"What fold?"

"The fold of Christ's people."

"I'm afeard not, Miss Ellen," said he soberly, after a minute's pause.

"Because," said Ellen bursting into tears, "I wish you were, very much."

She carried the great brown hand to her lips before she let it go. He went without saying a word. But when he got out he stopped and looked at a little tear she had left on the back of it. And he looked till one of his own fell there to keep it company.

CHAPTER XXI.

O that *had*, how sad a passage 'tis!

SHAKSPEARE.

THE next day, about the middle of the afternoon, a light step crossed the shed, and the great door opening gently, in walked Miss Alice Humphreys. The room was all "redd up," and Miss Fortune and her mother sat there at work; one picking over white beans at the table, the other in her usual seat by the fire and at her usual employment, which was knitting. Alice came forward and asked the old lady how she did.

"Pretty well—O pretty well!"—she answered, with the look of bland good-humor her face almost always wore,—"and glad to see you dear. Take a chair."

Alice did so, quite aware that the other person in the room was *not* glad to see her.

"And how goes the world with you, Miss Fortune?"

"Humph! it's a queer kind of a world I think," answered that lady dryly, sweeping some of the picked beans into her pan;—"I get a'most sick of it sometimes."

"Why what's the matter?" said Alice pleasantly; "may I ask? Has anything happened to trouble you?"

"O no!" said the other somewhat impatiently; "nothing that's any matter to any one but myself; it's no use speaking about it."

"Ah! Fortune never would take the world easy," said the old woman shaking her head from side to side;—"never would;—I never could get her to."

"Now do hush mother, will you!" said her daughter, turning round upon her with startling sharpness of look and tone;—"'take the world easy!' you always did; I am glad I aint like you."

"I don't think it's a bad way after all," said Alice; "what's the use of taking it hard Miss Fortune?"

"The way one goes on!" said that lady, picking away at her beans very fast and not answering Alice's question,—"I'm tired of it;—toil, toil, and drive, drive,—from morning to night;—and what's the end of it all?"

"Not much," said Alice gravely, "if our toiling looks no further than *this* world. When we go we shall carry nothing away with us. I should think it would be very wearisome to toil only for what we cannot keep nor stay long to enjoy."

"It's a pity you warn't a minister Miss Alice," said Miss Fortune dryly.

"O no, Miss Fortune," said Alice smiling, "the family would be overstocked. My father is one and my brother will be another; a third would be too much. You must be so good as to let me preach without taking orders."

"Well I wish every minister was as good a one as you'd make," said Miss Fortune, her hard face giving way a little;—"at any rate nobody 'd mind anything you'd say Miss Alice."

"That would be unlucky, in one sense," said Alice; "but I believe I know what you mean. But Miss Fortune no one would dream the world went very hard with you. I don't know anybody I think lives in more independent comfort and plenty and has things more to her mind. I never come to the house that I am not struck with the fine look of the farm and all that belongs to it."

"Yes," said the old lady nodding her head two or three times, "Mr. Van Brunt is a good farmer—very good—there's no doubt about that."

"I wonder what *he'd* do," said Miss Fortune, quickly and sharply as before, "if there warn't a head to manage for him!—O the farm's well enough Miss Alice,—tain't that; every one knows where his own shoe pinches."

"I wish you'd let me into the secret then, Miss Fortune; I'm a cobbler by profession."

Miss Fortune's ill humor was giving way, but something disagreeable seemed again to cross her mind. Her brow darkened.

"I say it's a poor kind of world and I'm sick of it! One may slave and slave one's life out for other people, and what thanks do you get?—I'm sick of it."

"There's a little body up-stairs, or I'm much mistaken, who will give you very sincere thanks for every kindness shown her."

Miss Fortune tossed her head, and brushing the refuse beans into her lap, she pushed back her chair with a jerk to go the fire with them.

"Much you know about her Miss Alice! Thanks indeed! I haven't seen the sign of such a thing since she's been here, for all I have worked and worked and had plague enough with her I am sure. Deliver me from other people's children, say I!"

"After all, Miss Fortune," said Alice soberly, "it is not what we *do* for people that makes them love us,—or at least everything depends on the way things are done. A look of love, a word of kindness, goes further towards winning the heart than years of service or benefactions mountain-high without them."

"Does she say I am unkind to her?" asked Miss Fortune fiercely.

"Pardon me," said Alice, "words on her part are unnecessary; it is easy to see from your own that there is no love lost between you, and I am very sorry it is so."

"Love indeed!" said Miss Fortune with great indignation; "there never was any to lose I can assure you. She plagues the very life out of me. Why she hadn't been here three days before she went off with that girl Nancy Vawse that I had told her never to go near, and was gone all night; that's the time she got in the brook. And if you'd seen her face when I was scolding her about it!—it was like seven thunder clouds. Much you know about it! I dare say she's very sweet to you; that's the way she is to everybody beside me—they all think she's too good to live; and it just makes me mad!"

"She told me herself," said Alice, "of her behaving ill another time, about her mother's letter."

"Yes—that was another time. I wish you'd seen her!"

"I believe she saw and felt her fault in that case. Didn't she ask your pardon? she said she would."

"Yes," said Miss Fortune dryly, "after a fashion."

"Has she had her letter yet?"

"No."

"How is she to-day?"

"O she's well enough—she's sitting up. You can go up and see her."

"I will directly," said Alice. "But now Miss Fortune I am going to ask a favor of you,—will you do me a great pleasure?"

"Certainly Miss Alice,—if I can."

"If you think Ellen has been sufficiently punished for her ill-behavior—if you do not think it right to withhold her letter still,—will you let me have the pleasure of giving it to her? I should take it as a great favor to myself."

Miss Fortune made no kind of reply to this, but stalked out of the room, and in a few minutes stalked in again with the letter, which she gave to Alice, only saying shortly, "It came to me in a letter from her father."

"You are willing she should have it?" said Alice.

"O yes!—do what you like with it."

Alice now went softly up-stairs. She found Ellen's door a little ajar, and looking in could see Ellen seated in a rocking-chair between the door and the fire, in her double-gown, and with her hymn-book in hand. It happened that Ellen had spent a good part of that afternoon in crying for her lost letter; and the face that she turned to the door on hearing some slight noise outside was very white and thin indeed. And though it was placid too, her eye searched the crack of the door with a keen wistfulness that went to Alice's heart. But as the door was gently pushed open, and the eye caught the figure that stood behind it, the sudden and entire change of expression took away all her powers of speech. Ellen's face became radiant; she rose from her chair, and as Alice silently came in and kneeling down to be near her took her in her arms, Ellen put both hers round Alice's neck and laid her face there;—one was too happy and the other too touched to say a word.

"My poor child!" was Alice's first expression.

"No I aint," said Ellen, tightening the squeeze of her arms round Alice's neck; "I am not poor at all now."

Alice presently rose, sat down in the rocking-chair and took Ellen in her lap; and Ellen rested her head on her bosom as she had been wont to do of old time on her mother's.

"I am too happy," she murmured. But she was weep-

ing, and the current of tears seemed to gather force as it flowed. What was little Ellen thinking of just then? O those times gone by!—when she had sat just so; her head pillowed on another as gentle a breast; kind arms wrapped round her, just as now; the same little old double-gown; the same weak helpless feeling; the same committing herself to the strength and care of another;—how much the same, and oh! how much not the same!—and Ellen knew both. Blessing as she did the breast on which she leaned and the arms whose pressure she felt, they yet reminded her sadly of those most loved and so very far away; and it was an odd mixture of relief and regret, joy and sorrow, gratified and ungratified affection, that opened the sluices of her eyes. Tears poured.

"What is the matter my love?" said Alice softly.

"I don't know," whispered Ellen.

"Are you so glad to see me? or so sorry? or what is it?"

"Oh, glad and sorry both, I think," said Ellen with a long breath, and sitting up.

"Have you wanted me so much my poor child?"

"I cannot tell you how much,"—said Ellen, her words cut short.

"And didn't you know that I have been sick too? What did you think had become of me? Why Mrs. Vawse was with me a whole week, and this is the very first day I have been able to go out. It is so fine to-day I was permitted to ride Sharp down."

"Was that it?" said Ellen. "I did wonder Miss Alice, I did wonder very much why you did not come to see me, but I never liked to ask aunt Fortune, because—"

"Because what?"

"I don't know as I ought to say what I was going to;—I had a feeling she would be glad about what I was sorry about."

"Don't know *that* you ought to say," said Alice. "Remember, you are to study English with me."

Ellen smiled a glad smile.

"And you have had a weary two weeks of it, haven't you, dear?"

"Oh," said Ellen, with another long drawn sigh, "how weary! Part of that time to be sure I was out of my head;

but I have got *so* tired lying here all alone; aunt Fortune coming in and out was just as good as nobody."

"Poor child!" said Alice, "you have had a worse time than I."

"I used to lie and watch that crack in the door at the foot of my bed," said Ellen, "and I got so tired of it I hated to see it but when I opened my eyes I couldn't help looking at it, and watching all the little ins and outs in the crack till I was as sick of it as could be. And that button too that fastens the door, and the little round mark the button has made, and thinking how far the button went round. And then if I looked towards the windows I would go right to counting the panes, first up and down and then across; and I didn't want to count them, but I couldn't help it; and watching to see through which pane the sky looked brightest. Oh I got so sick of it all! There was only the fire that I didn't get tired of looking at; I always liked to lie and look at that, except when it hurt my eyes. And oh how I wanted to see you, Miss Alice! You can't think how sad I felt that you didn't come to see me. I couldn't think what could be the matter."

"I should have been with you, dear, and not have left you, if I had not been tied at home myself."

"So I thought; and that made it seem so very strange. But O! don't you think," said Ellen, her face suddenly brightening,—"don't you think Mr. Van Brunt came up to see me last night? Wasn't it good of him? He even sat down and read to me; only think of that. And isn't he kind? he asked if I would like a rocking-chair; and of course I said yes, for these other chairs are dreadful, they break my back; and there wasn't such a thing as a rocking-chair in aunt Fortune's house, she hates 'em she says; and this morning, the first thing I knew in walked Mr. Van Brunt with this nice rocking-chair. Just get up and see how nice it is;—you see the back is cushioned, and the elbows, as well as the seat;—it's queer-looking, aint it? but it's very comfortable. Wasn't it good of him?"

"It was very kind, I think. But do you know, Ellen, I am going to have a quarrel with you?"

"What about?" said Ellen. "I don't believe it's anything very bad, for you look pretty good-humored, considering."

"Nothing *very* bad," said Alice, "but still enough to

quarrel about. You have twice said '*aint*' since I have been here."

"Oh," said Ellen, laughing, "is that all?"

"Yes," said Alice, "and my English ears don't like it at all."

"Then they sha'n't hear it," said Ellen, kissing her. "I don't know what makes me say it; I never used to. But I've got more to tell you; I've had more visiters. Who do you think came to see me?—you'd never guess—Nancy Vawse! Mr. Van Brunt came in the very nick of time, when I was almost worried to death with her. Only think of *her* coming up here! unknown to everybody. And she stayed an age, and how she *did* go on. She cracked nuts on the hearth;—she got every stitch of my clothes out of my trunk and scattered them over the floor;—she tried to make me drink gruel till between us we spilled a great parcel on the bed; and she had begun to tickle me when Mr. Van Brunt came. O wasn't I glad to see him! And when aunt Fortune came up and saw it all she was as angry as she could be; and she scolded and scolded, till at last I told her it was none of my doing,—I couldn't help it at all,—and she needn't talk so to me about it; and then she said it was my fault the whole of it! that if I hadn't scraped acquaintance with Nancy when she had forbidden me all this would never have happened."

"There is some truth in that, isn't there, Ellen?"

"Perhaps so; but I think it might all have happened whether or no; and at any rate it is a little hard to talk so to me about it now when it's all over and can't be helped. O, I have been so tired to-day, Miss Alice!—aunt Fortune has been in such a bad humor."

"What put her in a bad humor?"

"Why all this about Nancy in the first place; and then I know she didn't like Mr. Van Brunt's bringing the rocking-chair for me; she couldn't say much but I could see by her face. And then Mrs. Van Brunt's coming—I don't think she liked that. O, Mrs. Van Brunt came to see me this morning and brought me a custard. How many people are kind to me!—everywhere I go."

"I hope, dear Ellen, you don't forget whose kindness sends them all."

"I don't, Miss Alice; I always think of that now; and it seems you can't think how pleasant to me sometimes."

"Then I hope you can bear unkindness from one poor woman,—who after all isn't as happy as you are,—without feeling any ill-will towards her in return."

"I don't think I feel ill-will towards her," said Ellen; "I always try as hard as I can not to; but I can't *like* her Miss Alice; and I do get out of patience. It's very easy to put me out of patience I think; it takes almost nothing sometimes."

"But remember, 'charity suffereth long and is kind.'"

"And I try all the while dear Miss Alice to keep down my bad feelings," said Ellen, her eyes watering as she spoke; "I try and pray to get rid of them, and I hope I shall by-and-by; I believe I am very bad."

Alice drew her closer.

"I have felt very sad part of to-day," said Ellen presently; "aunt Fortune, and my being so lonely, and my poor letter, altogether;—but part of the time I felt a great deal better. I was learning that lovely hymn,—do you know it Miss Alice?—'Poor, weak, and worthless, though I am?'——"

Alice went on:—

> I have a rich almighty friend,
> Jesus the Saviour is his name,
> He freely loves, and without end.

"O dear, Ellen, whoever can say that, has no right to be unhappy. No matter what happens, we have enough to be glad of."

"And then I was thinking of those words in the Psalms,—'Blessed is the man'—stop, I'll find it; I don't know exactly how it goes;—'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered.'"

"O yes indeed!" said Alice. "It is a shame that any trifles should worry much those whose sins are forgiven them and who are the children of the great King. Poor Miss Fortune never knew the sweetness of those words. We ought to be sorry for her and pray for her Ellen; and never, never, even in thought, return evil for evil. It is not like Christ to do so."

"I will not, I will not, if I can help it," said Ellen.

"You can help it; but there is only one way. Now Ellen

dear, I have three pieces of news for you that I think you will like. One concerns you, another myself, and the third concerns both you and myself. Which will you have first?"

"Three pieces of good news!" said Ellen with opening eyes;—"I think I'll have my part first."

Directing Ellen's eyes to her pocket, Alice slowly made the corner of the letter show itself. Ellen's color came and went quick as it was drawn forth; but when it was fairly out and she knew it again, she flung herself upon it with a desperate eagerness Alice had not looked for; she was startled at the half frantic way in which the child clasped and kissed it, weeping bitterly at the same time. Her transport was almost hysterical. She had opened the letter, but she was not able to read a word; and quitting Alice's arms she threw herself upon the bed, sobbing in a mixture of joy and sorrow that seemed to take away her reason. Alice looked on surprised a moment, but only a moment, and turned away.

When Ellen was able to begin her letter the reading of it served to throw her back into fresh fits of tears. Many a word of Mrs. Montgomery's went so to her little daughter's heart that its very inmost cords of love and tenderness were wrung. It is true the letter was short and very simple; but it came from her mother's heart; it was written by her mother's hand; and the very old remembered handwriting had mighty power to move her. She was so wrapped up in her own feelings that through it all she never noticed that Alice was not near her, that Alice did not speak to comfort her. When the letter had been read time after time and wept over again and again, and Ellen at last was folding it up for the present, she bethought herself of her friend and turned to look after her. Alice was sitting by the window, her face hid in her hands; and as Ellen drew near she was surprised to see that *her* tears were flowing and her breast heaving. Ellen came quite close and softly laid her hand on Alice's shoulder. But it drew no attention.

"Miss Alice," said Ellen almost fearfully,—"*dear* Miss Alice,"—and her own eyes filled fast again, "what is the matter?—won't you tell me?—Oh don't do so! please don't!"

"I will not," said Alice lifting her head; "I am sorry I have troubled you dear; I am sorry I could not help it."

She kissed Ellen, who stood anxious and sorrowful by her side, and brushed away her tears. But Ellen saw she had been shedding a great many.

"What is the matter, dear Miss Alice? what has happened to trouble you?—won't you tell me?"—Ellen was almost crying herself.

Alice came back to the rocking-chair, and took Ellen in her arms again; but she did not answer her. Leaning her face against Ellen's forehead she remained silent. Ellen ventured to ask no more questions; but lifting her hand once or twice caressingly to Alice's face she was distressed to find her cheek wet still. Alice spoke at last.

"It isn't fair not to tell you what is the matter, dear Ellen, since I have let you see me sorrowing. It is nothing new, nor anything I would have otherwise if I could. It is only that I have had a mother once, and have lost her;—and you brought back the old time so strongly that I could not command myself."

Ellen felt a hot tear drop upon her forehead, and again ventured to speak her sympathy only by silently stroking Alice's cheek.

"It is all past now," said Alice; "it is all well. I would not have her back again. I shall go to her I hope by-and-by."

"Oh no! you must stay with me," said Ellen, clasping both arms round her.

There was a long silence, during which they remained locked in each other's arms.

"Ellen dear," said Alice at length, "we are both motherless, for the present at least,—both of us almost alone; I think God has brought us together to be a comfort to each other. We will be sisters while he permits us to be so. Don't call me Miss Alice any more. You shall be my little sister and I will be your elder sister, and my home shall be your home as well."

Ellen's arms were drawn very close round her companion at this, but she said nothing, and her face was hid in Alice's bosom. There was another very long pause. Then Alice spoke in a livelier tone.

"Come Ellen! look up! you and I have forgotten ourselves; it isn't good for sick people to get down in the dumps.

Look up and let me see these pale cheeks. Don't you want something to eat?"

"I don't know," said Ellen faintly.

"What would you say to a cup of chicken broth?"

"O I should like it very much!" said Ellen with new energy.

"Margery made me some particularly nice, as she always does; and I took it into my head a little might not come amiss to you; so I resolved to stand the chance of Sharp's jolting it all over me, and I rode down with a little pail of it on my arm. Let me rake open these coals and you shall have some directly."

"And did you come without being spattered?" said Ellen.

"Not a drop. Is this what you use to warm things in? Never mind, it has had gruel in it; I'll set the tin pail on the fi e; it won't hurt it."

"I am so much obliged to you," said Ellen, "for do you know I have got quite tired of gruel, and panada I can't bear."

"Then I am very glad I brought it."

While it was warming Alice washed Ellen's gruel cup and spoon; and presently she had the satisfaction of seeing Ellen eating the broth with that keen enjoyment none know but those that have been sick and are getting well. She smiled to see her gaining strength almost in the very act of swallowing.

"Ellen," said she presently, "I have been considering your dressing-table. It looks rather doleful. I'll make you a present of some dimity, and when you come to see me you shall make a cover for it that will reach down to the floor and hide those long legs."

"That wouldn't do at all," said Ellen; "aunt Fortune would go off into all sorts of fits."

"What about?"

"Why the washing, Miss Alice—to have such a great thing to wash every now and then. You can't think what a fuss she makes if I have more than just so many white clothes in the wash every week."

"That's too bad," said Alice. "Suppose you bring it up to me—it wouldn't be often—and I'll have it washed for you, —if you care enough about it to take the trouble."

"O indeed I do!" said Ellen; "I should like it very much; and I'll get Mr. Van Brunt to—no I can't, aunt Fortune won't let me; I was going to say I would get him to saw off the legs and make it lower for me, and then my dressing-box would stand so nicely on the top. Maybe I can yet. Oh I never showed you my boxes and things."

Ellen brought them all out and displayed their beauties. In the course of going over the writing-desk she came to the secret drawer and a little money in it.

"Oh that puts me in mind!" she said. "Miss Alice, this money is to be spent for some poor child;—now I've been thinking Nancy has behaved so to me I should like to give her something to show her that I don't feel unkindly about it—what do you think would be a good thing?"

"I don't know Ellen—I'll take the matter into consideration."

"Do you think a Bible would do?"

"Perhaps that would do as well as anything;—I'll think about it."

"I should like to do it very much," said Ellen, "for she has vexed me wonderfully."

"Well, Ellen, would you like to hear my other pieces of news? or have you no curiosity?"

"O yes indeed," said Ellen; "I had forgotten it entirely; what is it Miss Alice?"

"You know I told you one concerns only myself, but it is great news to me. I learnt this morning that my brother will come to spend the holidays with me. It is many months since I have seen him."

"Does he live far away?" said Ellen.

"Yes,—he has gone far away to pursue his studies, and cannot come home often. The other piece of news is that I intend, if you have no objection, to ask Miss Fortune's leave to have you spend the holidays with me too."

"Oh, delightful!" said Ellen, starting up and clapping her hands and then throwing them round her adopted sister's neck;—"dear Alice how good you are!"

"Then I suppose I may reckon upon your consent," said Alice, "and I'll speak to Miss Fortune without delay."

"O thank you dear Miss Alice;—how glad I am! I shall

be happy all the time from now till then thinking of it. You aren't going?"

"I must."

"Ah don't go yet! Sit down again; you know you're my sister,—don't you want to read mamma's letter?"

"If you please Ellen, I should like it very much."

She sat down, and Ellen gave her the letter, and stood by while she read it, watching her with glistening eyes; and though as she saw Alice's fill her own overflowed again, she hung over her still to the last; going over every line this time with a new pleasure.

"*New York, Saturday, Nov.* 22, 18—.

"My Dear Ellen,

"I meant to have written to you before, but have been scarcely able to do so. I did make one or two efforts which came to nothing; I was obliged to give it up before finishing anything that could be called a letter. To-day I feel much stronger than I have at any time since your departure.

"I have missed you my dear child very much. There is not an hour in the day, nor a half hour, that the want of you does not come home to my heart; and I think I have missed you in my very dreams. This separation is a very hard thing to bear. But the hand that has arranged it does nothing amiss; we must trust Him my daughter that all will be well. I feel it *is* well; though sometimes the thought of your dear little face is almost too much for me. I will thank God I have had such a blessing so long, and I now commit my treasure to Him. It is an unspeakable comfort to me to do this, for nothing committed to his care is ever forgotten or neglected. Oh my daughter never forget to pray; never slight it. It is almost my only refuge, now I have lost you, and it bears me up. How often—how often,—through years gone by,—when heart-sick and faint,—I have fallen on my knees, and presently there have been as it were drops of cool water sprinkled upon my spirit's fever. Learn to love prayer, dear Ellen, and then you will have a cure for all the sorrows of life. And keep this letter, that if ever you are like to forget it, your mother's testimony may come to mind again.

"My tea, that used to be so pleasant, has become a sad meal to me. I drink it mechanically and set down my cup, re-

membering only that the dear little hand which used to minister to my wants is near me no more. My child—my child! —words are poor to express the heart's yearnings,—my spirit is near you all the time.

"Your old gentleman has paid me several visits. The day after you went came some beautiful pigeons. I sent word back that you were no longer here to enjoy his gifts, and the next day he came to see me. He has shown himself very kind. And all this, dear Ellen, had for its immediate cause your proper and ladylike behavior in the store. That thought has been sweeter to me than all the old gentleman's birds and fruit. I am sorry to inform you that though I have seen him so many times I am still perfectly ignorant of his name.

"We set sail Monday in the England. Your father has secured a nice state-room for me, and I have a store of comforts laid up for the voyage. So next week you may imagine me out on the broad ocean, with nothing but sky and clouds and water be seen around me, and probably much too sick to look at those. Never mind that; the sickness is good for me.

"I will write you as soon as I can again, and send by the first conveyance.

"And now my dear baby—my precious child—farewell. May the blessing of God be with you!

"Your affectionate mother,

E. Montgomery."

"You ought to be a good child Ellen," said Alice, as she dashed away some tears. "Thank you for letting me see this; it has been a great pleasure to me."

"And now," said Ellen, "you feel as if you knew mamma a little."

"Enough to honor and respect her very much. Now good-bye, my love; I must be at home before 5 is late. I will see you again before Christmas comes."

CHAPTER XXII.

When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail.

SHAKSPEARE.

To Ellen's sorrow she was pronounced next morning well enough to come down stairs; her aunt averring that "it was no use to keep a fire burning up there for nothing." She must get up and dress in the cold again; and winter had fairly set in now; the 19th of December rose clear and keen. Ellen looked sighingly at the heap of ashes and the dead brands in the fireplace where the bright little fire had blazed so cheerfully the evening before. But regrets did not help the matter; and shivering she began to dress as fast as she could. Since her illness a basin and pitcher had been brought into her room, so the washing at the spout was ended for the present; and though the basin had no place but a chair and the pitcher must stand on the floor, Ellen thought herself too happy. But how cold it was! The wind swept past her windows giving wintry shakes to the panes of glass, and through many an opening in the wooden frame-work of the house it came in and saluted Ellen's bare arms and neck. She hurried to finish her dressing, and wrapping her double-gown over all, went down to the kitchen. It was another climate there. A great fire was burning that it quite cheered Ellen's heart to look at; and the air seemed to be full of coffee and buckweat cakes; Ellen almost thought she should get enough breakfast by the sense of smell.

"Ah! here you are," said Miss Fortune. "What have you got that thing on for?"

"It was so cold up stairs," said Ellen, drawing up her shoulders. The warmth had not got inside of her wrapper yet.

"Well 'taint cold here; you'd better pull it off right away. I've no notion of people's making themselves tender. You'll be warm enough directly. Breakfast 'll warm you."

Ellen felt almost inclined to quarrel with the breakfast that was offered in exchange for her comfortable wrapper; she pulled it off however and sat down without saying anything. Mr. Van Brunt put some cakes on her plate.

"If breakfast's a going to warm you," said he, "make haste and get something down; or drink a cup of coffee; you're as blue as skim milk."

"Am I?" said Ellen laughing; "I feel blue; but I can't eat such a pile of cakes as that, Mr. Van Brunt."

As a general thing the meals at Miss Fortune's were silent solemnities; an occasional consultation, or a few questions and remarks about farm affairs, being all that ever passed. The breakfast this morning was a singular exception to the common rule.

"I am in a regular quandary," said the mistress of the house when the meal was about half over.

Mr. Van Brunt looked up for an instant, and asked "what about?"

"Why how I am ever going to do to get those apples and sausage-meat done. If I go to doing 'em myself I shall about get through by spring."

"Why don't you make a bee?" said Mr. Van Brunt.

"Aint enough of either on 'em to make it worth while. I aint a going to have all the bother of a bee without something to show for't."

"Turn 'em both into one," suggested her counsellor, going on with his breakfast.

"Both?"

"Yes—let 'em pare apples in one room and cut pork in t'other."

"But I wonder who ever heard of such a thing before," said Miss Fortune, pausing with her cup of coffee half way to her lips. Presently, however, it was carried to her mouth, drunk off, and set down with an air of determination.

"I don't care," said she, "if it never was heard of. I'll do it for once anyhow. I'm not one of them to care what folks say. I'll have it so! But I won't have 'em to tea, mind you; I'd rather throw apples and all into the fire at

once. I'll have but one plague of setting tables, and that. I won't have 'em to tea. I'll make it up to 'em in the supper though."

"I'll take care to publish that," said Mr. Van Brunt.

"Don't you go and do such a thing," said Miss Fortune earnestly. "I shall have the whole country on my hands. I won't have but just as many on 'em as 'll do what I want done; that'll be as much as I can stand under. Don't you whisper a word of it to a living creature. I'll go round and ask 'em myself to come Monday evening."

"Monday evening—then I suppose you'd like to have up the sleigh this afternoon. Who's acoming?"

"I don't know; I ha'n't asked 'em yet."

"They'll every soul come that's asked, that you may depend; there aint one on 'em that would miss of it for a dollar."

Miss Fortune bridled a little at the implied tribute to her housekeeping.

"If I was some folks I wouldn't let people know I was in such a mighty hurry to get a good supper," she observed rather scornfully.

"Humph!" said Mr. Van Brunt; "I think a good supper aint a bad thing; and I've no objection to folk's knowing it."

"Pshaw! I didn't mean *you*," said Miss Fortune; "I was thinking of those Lawsons, and other folks."

"If you're agoing to ask *them* to your bee you aint of my mind."

"Well I am though," replied Miss Fortune; "there's a good many hands of 'em; they can turn off a good lot of work in an evening; and they always take care to get me to *their* bees. I may as well get something out of them in return if I can."

"They'll reckon on getting as much as they can out o' *you*, if they come, there's no sort of doubt in my mind. It's my belief Mimy Lawson will kill herself some of these days upon green corn. She was at home to tea one day last summer, and I declare I thought—"

What Mr. Van Brunt thought he left his hearers to guess.

"Well, let them kill themselves if they like," said Miss Fortune; "I am sure I am willing; there'll be enough; I aint agoing to mince matters when once I begin. Now let me see. There's five of the Lawsons to begin with—I

suppose they'll all come;—Bill Huff, and Jany, that's seven;—"

"That Bill Huff is as good-natured a fellow as ever broke ground," remarked Mr. Van Brunt. "Aint better people in the town than them Huffs are."

"They're well enough," said Miss Fortune. "Seven—and the Hitchcocks, there's three of them, that'll make ten,—"

"Dennison's aint far from there," said Mr. Van Brunt. Dan Dennison's a fine hand at a'most anything, in doors or out."

"That's more than you can say for his sister. Cilly Dennison gives herself so many airs it's altogether too much for plain country folks. I should like to know what she thinks herself. It's a'most too much for my stomach to see her flourishing that watch and chain."

"What's the use of troubling yourself about other people's notions?" said Mr. Van Brunt. "If folks want to take the road let 'em have it. That's my way. I am satisfied, provided they don't run me over."

"'Taint *my* way then, I'd have you to know," said Miss Fortune; "I despise it! And 'taint your way neither, Van Brunt; what did you give Tom Larkens a cowhiding for?"

"'Cause he deserved it, if ever a man did," said Mr. Van Brunt, quite rousing up;—"he was treating that little brother of his'n in a way a boy shouldn't be treated, and I am glad I did it. I gave him notice to quit before I laid a finger on him. He warn't doing nothing to *me*."

"And how much good do you suppose it did?" said Miss Fortune rather scornfully.

"It did just the good I wanted to do. He has seen fit to let little Billy alone ever since."

"Well I guess I'll let the Dennisons come," said Miss Fortune; "that makes twelve, and you and your mother are fourteen. I suppose that man Marshchalk will come dangling along after the Hitchcocks."

"To be sure he will; and his aunt, Miss Janet, will come with him most likely."

"Well—there's no help for it," said Miss Fortune. "That makes sixteen."

"Will you ask Miss Alice?"

"Not I! she's another of your proud set. I don't want to

see anybody that thinks she's going to do me a great favor by coming."

Ellen's lips opened, but wisdom came in time to stop the words that were on her tongue. It did not however prevent the quick little turn of her head which showed what she thought, and the pale cheeks were for a moment bright enough.

"She is, and I don't care who hears it," repeated Miss Fortune. "I suppose she'd look as sober as a judge too if she saw cider on the table; they say she won't touch a drop ever, and thinks it's wicked; and if that aint setting oneself up for better than other folks I don't know what is."

"I saw her paring apples at the Huffs though," said Mr. Van Brunt, "and as pleasant as anybody; but she didn't stay to supper."

"I'd ask Mrs. Vawse if I could get word to her," said Miss Fortune,—"but I can never travel up that mountain. If I get a sight of Nancy I'll tell her."

"There she is then," said Mr. Van Brunt, looking towards the little window that opened into the shed. And there indeed was the face of Miss Nancy pressed flat against the glass, peering into the room. Miss Fortune beckoned to her.

"That is the most impudent, shameless, outrageous piece of ———. What were you doing at the window?" said she as Nancy came in.

"Looking at you, Miss Fortune," said Nancy coolly. "What have you been talking about this great while? If there had only been a pane of glass broken I needn't have asked."

"Hold your tongue," said Miss Fortune, "and listen to me."

"I'll listen, ma'am," said Nancy, "but it's of no use to hold my tongue. I do try sometimes, but I never could keep it long."

"Have you done?"

"I don't know, ma'am," said Nancy, shaking her head; "it's just as it happens."

"You tell your granny I am going to have a bee here next Monday evening, and ask her if she'll come to it."

Nancy nodded. "If it's good weather," she added conditionally.

"Stop, Nancy!" said Miss Fortune, "here!"—for Nancy was shutting the door behind her.—"As sure as you come here Monday night without your grandma you'll go out of the house quicker than you come in; see if you don't!'

With another gracious nod and smile Nancy departed.

"Well," said Mr. Van Brunt rising, "I'll despatch this business down stairs, and then I'll bring up the sleigh. The pickle's ready I suppose."

"No it aint," said Miss Fortune, "I couldn't make it yesterday; but it's all in the kettle, and I told Sam to make a fire down stairs, so you can put it on when you go down. The kits are all ready, and the salt and everything else."

Mr. Van Brunt went down the stairs that led to the lower kitchen; and Miss Fortune, to make up for lost time, set about her morning's work with even an uncommon measure of activity. Ellen, in consideration of her being still weak, was not required to do anything. She sat and looked on, keeping out of the way of her bustling aunt as far as it was possible; but Miss Fortune's gyrations were of that character that no one could tell five minutes beforehand what she she might consider "in the way." Ellen wished for her quiet room again. Mr. Van Brunt's voice sounded down stairs in tones of business; what could he be about? it must be very uncommon business that kept him in the house. Ellen grew restless with the desire to go and see, and to change her aunt's company for his; and no sooner was Miss Fortune fairly shut up in the buttery at some secret work than Ellen gently opened the door at the head of the lower stairs and looked down. Mr. Van Brunt was standing at the bottom and he looked up.

"May I come down there Mr. Van Brunt?" said Ellen softly.

"Come down here? to be be sure you may! You may always come straight where I am without asking any questions."

Ellen went down. But before she reached the bottom stair she stopped with almost a start, and stood fixed with such a horrified face that neither Mr. Van Brunt nor Sam Larkens, who was there, could help laughing.

"What's the matter?" said the former,—"they're all dead enough Miss Ellen; you needn't be scared."

Three enormous hogs which had been killed the day before greeted Ellen's eyes. They lay in different parts of the room, with each a cob in his mouth. A fourth lay stretched upon his back on the kitchen table, which was drawn out into the middle of the floor. Ellen stood fast on the stair.

"Have they been killed!" was her first astonished exclamation, to which Sam responded with another burst.

"Be quiet Sam Larkens," said Mr. Van Brunt. "Yes Miss Ellen, they've been killed sure enough."

"Are these the same pigs I used to see you feeding with corn, Mr. Van Brunt?"

"The identical same ones," replied that gentleman, as laying hold of the head of the one on the table and applying his long sharp knife with the other hand, he while he was speaking severed it neatly and quickly from the trunk. "And very fine porkers they are; I aint ashamed of 'em."

"And what's going to be done with them now?" said Ellen.

"I am just going to cut them up and lay them down. Bless my heart! you never see nothing of the kind before, did you?"

"No," said Ellen. What do you mean by 'laying them down,' Mr. Van Brunt?"

"Why, laying 'em down in salt for pork and hams. You want to see the whole operation, don't you? Well here's a seat for you. You'd better fetch that painted coat o'yourn and wrap round you, for it aint quite so warm here as up stairs; but it's getting warmer. Sam, just you shut that door to, and throw on another log."

Sam built up as large a fire as could be made under a very large kettle that hung in the chimney. When Ellen came down in her wrapper she was established close in the chimney corner; and then Mr. Van Brunt, not thinking her quite safe from the keen currents of air that would find their way into the room, despatched Sam for an old buffalo robe that lay in the shed. This he himself with great care wrapped round her, feet and chair and all, and secured it in various places with old forks. He declared then she looked for all the world like an Indian, except her face; and in high good humor both, he went to cutting up the pork, and Ellen from out of her buffalo robe watched him.

It was beautifully done. Even Ellen could see that although she could not have known if it had been done ill. The knife guided by strength and skill seemed to go with the greatest ease and certainty just where he wished it; the hams were beautifully trimmed out; the pieces fashioned clean; no ragged cutting; and his quick-going knife disposed of carcass after carcass with admirable neatness and celerity. Sam meanwhile arranged the pieces in different parcels at his direction, and minded the kettle, in which a great boiling and scumming was going on. Ellen was too much amused for a while to ask any questions. When the cutting up was all done the hams and shoulders were put in a cask by themselves and Mr. Van Brunt began to pack down the other pieces in the kits, strewing them with an abundance of salt.

"What's the use of putting all that salt with the pork, Mr. Van Brunt?" said Ellen.

"It wouldn't keep good without that; it would spoil very quick."

"Will the salt make it keep?"

"All the year round—as sweet as a nut."

"I wonder what is the reason of that," said Ellen. "Will salt make everything keep good?"

"Everything in the world—if it only has enough of it, and is kept dry and cool."

"Are you going to do the hams in the same way?"

"No;—they're to go in that pickle over the fire."

"In this kettle? what is in it?" said Ellen.

"You must ask Miss Fortune about that;—sugar and salt and saltpetre and molasses, and I don't know what all."

"And will this make the hams so different from the rest of the pork?"

"No; they've got to be smoked after they have laid in that for a while."

"Smoked!" said Ellen; "how?"

"Why ha'n't you been in the smokehouse? The hams has to be taken out of the pickle and hung up there; and then we make a little fire of oak chips and keep it burning night and day."

"And how long must they stay in the smoke?"

"Oh three or four weeks or so."

"And then they are done?"

"Then they are done."

"How very curious!" said Ellen. "Then it's the smoke that gives them that nice taste? I never knew smoke was good for anything before."

"Ellen!" said the voice of Miss Fortune from the top of the stairs,—"come right up here this minute! you'll catch your death!"

Ellen's countenance fell.

"There's no sort of fear of that, ma'am," said Mr. Van Brunt, quietly, "and Miss Ellen is fastened up so she can't get loose; and I can't let her out just now."

The upper door was shut again pretty sharply, but that was the only audible expression of opinion with which Miss Fortune favored them.

"I guess my leather curtains keep off the wind, don't they?" said Mr. Van Brunt.

"Yes indeed they do," said Ellen, "I don't feel a breath; I am as warm as a toast,—too warm almost. How nicely you have fixed me up, Mr. Van Brunt."

"I thought that 'ere old buffalo had done its work," he said, "but I'll never say anything is good for nothing again. Have you found out where the apples are yet?"

"No," said Ellen.

"Ha'n't Miss Fortune showed you! Well, it's time you'd know. Sam take that little basket and go fill it at the bin; I guess you know where they be, for I believe you put 'em there."

Sam went into the cellar, and presently returned with the basket nicely filled. He handed it to Ellen.

"Are all these for me?" she said in surprise.

"Every one on 'em," said Mr. Van Brunt.

"But I don't like to," said Ellen;—"what will aunt Fortune say?"

"She won't say a word," said Mr. Van Brunt; "and don't you say a word neither, but whenever you want apples just go to the bin and take 'em. *I* give you leave. It's right at the end of the far cellar, at the left hand corner; there are the bins and all sorts of apples in 'em. You've got a pretty variety there, ha'n't you?"

"O all sorts," said Ellen,—"and what beauties! and I

love apples very much,—red, and yellow, and speckled, and green.—What a great monster!"

"That's a Swar; that aint as good as most of the others; —those are Seek-no-furthers."

"Seek-no-further!" said Ellen;—"what a funny name. It ought to be a mighty good apple. *I* shall seek further at any rate. What is this?"

"That's as good an apple as you've got in the basket; that's a real Orson pippin; a very fine kind. I'll fetch you some up from home some day though that are better than the best of those."

The pork was all packed; the kettle was lifted off the fire; Mr. Van Brunt was wiping his hands from the salt.

"And now I suppose I must go," said Ellen with a little sigh.

"Why *I* must go," said he,—"so I suppose I may as well let you out of your tent first."

"I have had such a nice time," said Ellen; "I had got *so* tired of doing nothing up stairs. I am *very* much obliged to you Mr. Van Brunt. But," said she, stopping as she had taken up her basket to go,—"aren't you going to put the hams in the pickle?"

"No," said he laughing, "it must wait to get cold first. But you'll make a capital farmer's wife, there's no mistake."

Ellen blushed, and ran up stairs with her apples. To bestow them safely in her closet was her first care; the rest of the morning was spent in increasing weariness and listlessness. She had brought down her little hymn-book thinking to amuse herself with learning a hymn, but it would not do; eyes and head both refused their part of the work; and when at last Mr. Van Brunt came in to a late dinner, he found Ellen seated flat on the hearth before the fire, her right arm curled round upon the hard wooden bottom of one of the chairs, and her head pillowed upon that, fast asleep.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Van Brunt, "what's become of that 'ere rocking-cheer?"

"It's up stairs I suppose. You can go fetch it if you've a mind to," answered Miss Fortune dryly enough.

He did so immediately; and Ellen barely waked up to feel herself lifted from the floor and placed in the friendly rocking-

chair; Mr. Van Brunt remarking at the same time that "it might be well enough to let well folks lie on the floor and sleep on cheers, but cushions warn't a bit too soft for sick ones."

Among the cushions Ellen went to sleep again with a much better prospect of rest; and either sleeping or dozing passed away the time for a good while.

CHAPTER XXIII.

O that I were an Orange tree,
That busy plant!
Then should I always laden be,
And never want
Some fruit for him that dresseth me.

G. HERBERT.

SHE was thoroughly roused at last by the slamming of the house-door after her aunt. She and Mr. Van Brunt had gone forth on their sleighing expedition, and Ellen waked to find herself quite alone.

She could not long have doubted that her aunt was away, even if she had not caught a glimpse of her bonnet going out of the shed door,—the stillness was so uncommon. No such quiet could be with Miss Fortune anywhere about the premises. The old grandmother must have been abed and asleep too, for a cricket under the hearth and the wood fire in the chimney had it all to themselves, and made the only sounds that were heard; the first singing out every now and then in a very contented and cheerful style, and the latter giving occasional little snaps and sparks that just served to make one take notice how very quietly and steadily it was burning.

Miss Fortune had left the room put up in the last extreme of neatness. Not a speck of dust could be supposed to lie on the shining painted floor; the back of every chair was in its place against the wall. The very hearth-stones shone and the heads of the large iron nails in the floor were polished to steel. Ellen sat a while listening to the soothing chirrup of the cricket and the pleasant crackling of the flames. It was a fine cold winter's day. The two little windows at the far end of the kitchen looked out upon an expanse of snow; and the large lilac bush that grew close by the wall, moved lightly by the wind, drew its icy fingers over the panes of

glass. Wintry it was without; but that made the warmth and comfort within seem all the more. Ellen would have enjoyed it very much if she had had any one to talk to; as it was she felt rather lonely and sad. She had begun to learn a hymn; but it had set her off upon a long train of thought; and with her head resting on her hand, her fingers pressed into her cheek, the other hand with the hymn-book lying listlessly in her lap, and eyes staring into the fire, she was sitting the very picture of meditation when the door opened and Alice Humphreys came in. Ellen started up.

"O I'm so glad to see you! I'm all alone."

"Left alone, are you?" said Alice, as Ellen's warm lips were pressed again and again to her cold cheeks.

"Yes, aunt Fortune's gone out. Come and sit down here in the rocking-chair. How cold you are. O do you know she is going to have a great bee here Monday evening? What is a *bee?*"

Alice smiled. "Why," said she, "when people here in the country have so much of any kind of work to do that their own hands are not enough for it they send and call in their neighbors to help them,—that's a bee. A large party in the course of a long evening can do a great deal."

"But why do they call it a *bee?*"

"I don't know, unless they mean to be like a hive of bees for the time. 'As busy as a bee,' you know."

"Then they ought to call it a hive and not a bee I should think. Aunt Fortune is going to ask sixteen people. I wish you were coming!"

"How do you know but I am?"

"O I know you aren't. Aunt Fortune isn't going to ask you."

"You are sure of that, are you?"

"Yes, I wish I wasn't. O how she vexed me this morning by something she said!"

"You mustn't get vexed so easily my child. Don't let every little untoward thing roughen your temper."

"But I couldn't help it, dear Miss Alice; it was about you. I don't know whether I ought to tell you; but I don't think you'll mind it, and I know it isn't true. She said she didn't want you to come because you were one of the proud set."

"And what did *you* say?"

"Nothing. I had it just on the end of my tongue to say, 'It's no such thing;' but I didn't say it."

"I am glad you were so wise. Dear Ellen, that is nothing to be vexed about. If it were true, indeed, you might be sorry. I trust Miss Fortune is mistaken. I shall try and find some way to make her change her mind. I am glad you told me."

"I am *so* glad you are come, dear Alice!" said Ellen again. "I wish I could have you always!" And the long, very close pressure of her two arms about her friend said as much. There was a long pause. The cheek of Alice rested on Ellen's head which nestled against her; both were busily thinking; but neither spoke; and the cricket chirped and the flames crackled without being listened to.

"Miss Alice," said Ellen after a long time,—"I wish you would talk over a hymn with me."

"How do you mean my dear?" said Alice rousing herself.

"I mean, read it over and explain it. Mamma used to do it sometimes. I have been thinking a great deal about her to-day; and I think I'm very different from what I ought to be. I wish you would talk to me and make me better Miss Alice."

Alice pressed an earnest kiss upon the tearful little face that was uplifted to her, and presently said,

"I am afraid I shall be a poor substitute for your mother Ellen. What hymn shall we take?"

"Any one—this one if you like. Mamma likes it very much. I was looking it over to-day."

A charge to keep I have—
A God to glorify;
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.

Alice read the first line and paused.

"There now," said Ellen,—"what is a charge?"

"Don't you know that?"

"I think I do, but I wish you would tell me."

"Try to tell me first."

"Isn't it something that is given one to do?—I don't know exactly."

"It is something given one in trust, to be done or taken care of. I remember very well once when I was about your

age my mother had occasion to go out for half an hour, and she left me in charge of my little baby sister; she gave me a *charge* not to let anything disturb her while she was away and to keep her asleep if I could. And I remember how I kept my charge too. I was not to take her out of the cradle, but I sat beside her the whole time; I would not suffer a fly to light on her little fair cheek; I scarcely took my eyes from her; I made John keep pussy at a distance; and whenever one of the little round dimpled arms was thrown out upon the coverlet I carefully drew something over it again."

"Is she dead?" said Ellen timidly, her eyes watering in sympathy with Alice's.

"She is dead my dear; she died before we left England."

"I understand what a charge is," said Ellen after a little; "but what is this charge the hymn speaks of? What charge have I to keep?"

"The hymn goes on to tell you. The next line gives you part of it. 'A God to glorify.'"

"To glorify?" said Ellen doubtfully.

"Yes—that is to honor,—to give him all the honor that belongs to him."

"But can *I* honor *Him?*"

"Most certainly; either honor or dishonor; you cannot help doing one."

"I!" said Ellen again.

"Must not your behavior speak either well or ill for the mother who has brought you up?"

"Yes—I know that."

"Very well; when a child of God lives as he ought to do, people cannot help having high and noble thoughts of that glorious One whom he serves, and of that perfect law he obeys. Little as they may love the ways of religion, in their own secret hearts they *cannot help* confessing that there is a God and that they ought to serve him. But a worldling, and still more an unfaithful Christian, just helps people to forget there is such a Being, and makes them think either that religion is a sham, or that they may safely go on despising it. I have heard it said, Ellen, that Christians are the only Bible some people ever read; and it is true; all they know of religion is what they get from the lives of its professors; and O! were the world but full of the right kind of

example, the kingdom of darkness could not stand. 'Arise, shine!' is a word that every Christian ought to take home."

"But how can I shine?" asked Ellen.

"My dear Ellen!—in the faithful, patient, self-denying performance of every duty as it comes to hand,—'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'"

"It is very little that *I* can do," said Ellen.

"Perhaps more than you think, but never mind that. All are not great stars in the church; you may be only a little rushlight;—see you burn well!"

"I remember," said Ellen, musing,—"mamma once told me when I was going somewhere, that people would think strangely of *her* if I didn't behave well."

"Certainly. Why Ellen I formed an opinion of her very soon after I knew you."

"Did you!" said Ellen, with a wonderfully brightened face,—"what was it? was it good? ah! do tell me!"

"I am not quite sure of the wisdom of that," said Alice, smiling; "you might take home the praise that is justly her right and not yours."

"O no indeed," said Ellen, "I had rather she should have it than I. Please tell me what you thought of her, dear Alice,—I know it was good, at any rate."

"Well I will tell you," said Alice,—"at all risks. I thought your mother was a lady, from the honorable notions she had given you; and from your ready obedience to her, which was evidently the obedience of love, I judged she had been a good mother in the true sense of the term. I thought she must be a refined and cultivated person from the manner of your speech and behavior; and I was sure she was a Christian because she had taught you the truth, and evidently had tried to lead you in it."

The quivering face of delight with which Ellen began to listen gave way, long before Alice had done, to a burst of tears.

"It makes me so glad to hear you say that," she said.

"The praise of it is your mother's, you know, Ellen."

"I know it,—but you make me so glad!" And hiding her face in Alice's lap she fairly sobbed.

"You understand now, don't you, how Christians may honor or dishonor their Heavenly Father?"

"Yes, I do; but it makes me afraid to think of it."

"Afraid? it ought rather to make you glad. It is a great honor and happiness for us to be permitted to honor him.—

"A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky."

"Yes—that is the great duty you owe yourself. O never forget it dear Ellen! And whatever would hinder you, have nothing to do with it. 'What shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.'"

"To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill—"

"What is 'the present age?'" said Ellen.

"All the people who are living in the world at this time."

"But dear Alice!—what can I do to the present age?"

"Nothing to the most part of them certainly; and yet, dear Ellen, if your little rushlight shines well there is just so much the less darkness in the world,—though perhaps you light only a very little corner. Every Christian is a blessing to the world; another grain of salt to go towards sweetening and saving the mass."

"That is very pleasant to think of," said Ellen musing.

"O if we were but full of love to our Saviour, how pleasant it would be to do anything for him! how many ways we should find of honoring him by doing good."

"I wish you would tell me some of the ways that I can do it," said Ellen.

"You will find them fast enough if you seek them, Ellen. No one is so poor or so young but he has one talent at least to use for God."

"I wish I knew what mine is," said Ellen.

"Is your daily example as perfect as it can be?"

Ellen was silent and shook her head.

"Christ pleased not himself, and went about doing good; and he said, 'If any man serve me, let him *follow me*.' Remember that. Perhaps your aunt is unreasonable and unkind;—see with how much patience and perfect sweetness of temper you can bear and forbear; see if you cannot win

her over by untiring gentleness, obedience, and meekness Is there no improvement to be made here?"

"Oh me, yes!" answered Ellen with a sigh.

"Then your old grandmother. Can you do nothing to cheer her life in her old age and helplessness? can't you find some way of giving her pleasure? some way of amusing a long tedious hour now and then?"

Ellen looked very grave; in her inmost heart she knew this was a duty she shrank from.

"He 'went about doing good.' Keep that in mind. A kind word spoken,—a little thing done to smooth the way of one or lighten the load of another,—teaching those who need teaching,—entreating those who are walking in the wrong way,—O! my child, there is work enough!"

"To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill,
O may it all my powers engage
To do my Maker's will.

Arm me with jealous care,
As in thy sight to live;
And O! thy servant, Lord, prepare
A strict account to give."

"An account of what?" said Ellen.

"You know what an account is. If I give Thomas a dollar to spend for me at Carra-carra, I expect he will give me an exact *account* when he comes back, what he has done with every shilling of it. So must we give an account of what we have done with everything our Lord has committed to our care,—our hands, our tongues, our time, our minds, our influence; how much we have honored him, how much good we have done to others, how fast and how far we have grown holy and fit for heaven."

"It almost frightens me to hear you talk, Miss Alice."

"Not *frighten*, dear Ellen,—that is not the word; *sober* we ought to be;—mindful to do nothing we shall not wish to remember in the great day of account. Do you recollect how that day is described? Where is your Bible?"

She opened to the 20th chapter of the Revelation.

"And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Ellen shivered. "That is dreadful!" she said.

"It will be a dreadful day to all but those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life;—not dreadful to them, dear Ellen."

"But how shall I be sure, dear Alice, that *my* name is written there? and I can't be happy if I am not sure."

"My dear child," said Alice tenderly, as Ellen's anxious face and glistening eyes were raised to hers, "if you love Jesus Christ you may know you are his child, and none shall pluck you out of his hand."

"But how can I tell whether I do love him really? sometimes I think I do, and then again sometimes I am afraid I don't at all."

Alice answered in the words of Christ;—"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."

"Oh I don't keep his commandments!" said Ellen, the tears running down her cheeks.

"*Perfectly*, none of us do. But dear Ellen *that* is not the question. Is it your heart's desire and effort to keep them? Are you grieved when you fail? There is the point. You cannot love Christ without loving to please him."

Ellen rose and putting both arms round Alice's neck laid her head there, as her manner sometimes was, tears flowing fast.

"I sometimes think I do love him a little," she said, "but I do so many wrong things. But he will teach me to love him if I ask him, won't he, dear Alice?"

"Indeed he will, dear Ellen," said Alice, folding her arms round her little adopted sister,—"*indeed* he will. He has

promised that. Remember what he told somebody who was almost in despair,—'Fear not; only believe.'"

Alice's neck was wet with Ellen's tears; and after they had ceased to flow her arms kept their hold and her head its resting-place on Alice's shoulder for some time. It was necessary at last for Alice to leave her.

Ellen waited till the sound of her horse's footsteps died away on the road; and then sinking on her knees beside her rocking-chair she poured forth her whole heart in prayers and tears. She confessed many a fault and short-coming that none knew but herself; and most earnestly besought help that "her little rushlight might shine bright." Prayer was to little Ellen what it is to all that know it,—the satisfying of doubt, the soothing of care, the quieting of trouble. She had knelt down very uneasy; but she knew that God has promised to be the hearer of prayer, and she rose up very comforted, her mind fixing on those most sweet words Alice had brought to her memory,—"Fear not—only believe." When Miss Fortune returned Ellen was quietly asleep again in her rocking-chair, with a face very pale but calm as an evening sunbeam.

"Well I declare if that child aint sleeping her life away!" said Miss Fortune. "She's slept this whole blessed forenoon; I suppose she'll want to be alive and dancing the whole night to pay for it."

"I can tell you what she'll want a sight more," said Mr. Van Brunt, who had followed her in; it must have been to see about Ellen, for he was never known to do such a thing before or since;—"I'll tell you what she'll want, and that's a right hot supper. She eat as nigh as possible nothing at all this noon. There aint much danger of her dancing a hole in your floor this some time."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Is supper ready, the house trimmed, rushes strewed, cobwebs swept?
TAMING OF THE SHREW.

GREAT preparations were making all Saturday and Monday for the expected gathering. From morning till night Miss Fortune was in a perpetual bustle. The great oven was heated no less than three several times on Saturday alone. Ellen could hear the breaking of eggs in the buttery, and the sound of beating or whisking for a long time together; and then Miss Fortune would come out with floury hands, and plates of empty egg-shells made their appearance. But Ellen saw no more. Whenever the coals were swept out of the oven and Miss Fortune had made sure that the heat was just right for her purposes, Ellen was sent out of the way, and when she got back there was nothing to be seen but the fast-shut oven door. It was just the same when the dishes in all their perfection were to come out of the oven again. The utmost Ellen was permitted to see was the napkin covering some stray cake or pie that by chance had to pass through the kitchen where she was.

As she could neither help nor look on, the day passed rather wearily. She tried studying; a very little she found was enough to satisfy both mind and body in their present state. She longed to go out again and see how the snow looked, but a fierce wind all the fore part of the day made it unfit for her. Towards the middle of the afternoon she saw with joy that it had lulled, and though very cold, was so bright and calm that she might venture. She had eagerly opened the kitchen door to go up and get ready, when a long weary yawn from her old grandmother made her look back. The old lady had laid her knitting in her lap and bent her face down to her hand, which she was rubbing across her

brow as if to clear away the tired feeling that had settled there. Ellen's conscience instantly brought up Alice's words,—"Can't you do something to pass away a tedious hour now and then?" The first feeling was of vexed regret that they should have come into her head at that moment; then conscience said that was very selfish. There was a struggle. Ellen stood with the door in her hand, unable to go out or come in. But not long. As the words came back upon her memory,—"A charge to keep I have,"—her mind was made up; after one moment's prayer for help and forgiveness she shut the door, came back to the fireplace, and spoke in a cheerful tone.

"Grandma, wouldn't you like to have me read something to you?"

"Read!" answered the old lady," "Laws a me! *I* don't read nothing deary."

"But wouldn't you like to have *me* read to you, grandma?"

The old lady in answer to this laid down her knitting, folded both arms round Ellen, and kissing her a great many times declared she should like anything that came out of that sweet little mouth. As soon as she was set free Ellen brought her Bible, sat down close beside her, and read chapter after chapter; rewarded even then by seeing that though her grandmother said nothing she was listening with fixed attention, bending down over her knitting as if in earnest care to catch every word. And when at last she stopped, warned by certain noises down stairs that her aunt would presently be bustling in, the old lady again hugged her close to her bosom, kissing her forehead and cheeks and lips, and declaring that she was "a great deal sweeter than any sugarplums;" and Ellen was very much surprised to feel her face wet with a tear from her grandmother's cheek. Hastily kissing her again (for the first time in her life) she ran out of the room, her own tears starting and her heart swelling big. "O! how much pleasure," she thought, "I might have given my poor grandma, and how I have let her alone all this while! How wrong I have been. But it sha'n't be so in future!"

It was not quite sundown, and Ellen thought she might yet have two or three minutes in the open air. So she wrapped up very warm and went out to the chip yard.

Ellen's heart was very light; she had just been fulfilling a duty that cost her a little self-denial, and the reward had already come; and now it seemed to her that she had never seen anything so perfectly beautiful as the scene before her;—the brilliant snow that lay in a thick carpet over all the fields and hills, and the pale streaks of sunlight stretching across it between the long shadows that reached now from the barn to the house. One moment the light tinted the snow-capped fences and whitened barn-roofs; then the lights and the shadows vanished together, and it was all one cold dazzling white. O how glorious!—Ellen almost shouted to herself. It was too cold to stand still; she ran to the barn-yard to see the cows milked. There they were,—all her old friends,—Streaky and Dolly and Jane and Sukey and Betty Flynn,—sleek and contented; winter and summer were all the same to them. And Mr. Van Brunt was very glad to see her there again, and Sam Larkens and Johnny Low looked as if they were too, and Ellen told them with great truth she was very glad indeed to be there; and then she went in to supper with Mr. Van Brunt and an amazing appetite.

That was Saturday. Sunday passed quietly, though Ellen could not help suspecting it was not entirely a day of rest to her aunt; there was a savory smell of cooking in the morning which nothing that came on table by any means accounted for, and Miss Fortune was scarcely to be seen the whole day.

With Monday morning began a grand bustle, and Ellen was well enough now to come in for her share. The kitchen, parlor, hall, shed, and lower kitchen, must all be thoroughly swept and dusted; this was given to her, and a morning's work pretty near she found it. Then she had to rub bright all the brass handles of the doors, and the big brass andirons in the parlor, and the brass candlesticks on the parlor mantlepiece. When at last she had got through and came to the fire to warm herself, she found her grandmother lamenting that her snuff-box was empty, and asking her daughter to fill it for her.

"O I can't be bothered to be running up stairs to fill snuff-boxes!" answered that lady; "you'll have to wait."

"I'll get it grandma," said Ellen, "if you'll tell me where."

"Sit down and be quiet!" said Miss Fortune. "You go into my room just when I bid you, and not till then."

Ellen sat down. But no sooner was Miss Fortune hid in the buttery than the old lady beckoned her to her side, and nodding her head a great many times, gave her the box, saying softly,

"You can run up now, she won't see you, deary. It's in a jar in the closet. Now's the time."

Ellen could not bear to say no. She hesitated a minute, and then boldly opened the buttery door.

"Keep out!—what do you want?"

"She wanted me to go for the snuff," said Ellen in a whisper; "please do let me—I won't look at anything nor touch anything, but just get the snuff."

With an impatient gesture her aunt snatched the box from her hand, pushed Ellen out of the buttery and shut the door. The old lady kissed and fondled her as if she had done what she had only tried to do; smoothed down her hair, praising its beauty, and whispered,

"Never mind deary,—you'll read to grandma, won't you?"

It cost Ellen no effort now. With the beginning of kind offices to her poor old parent, kind feeling had sprung up fast; instead of disliking and shunning she had begun to love her.

There was no dinner for any one this day. Mr. and Mrs. Van Brunt came to an early tea; after which Ellen was sent to dress herself, and Mr. Van Brunt to get some pieces of board for the meat-choppers. He came back presently with an armful of square bits of wood; and sitting down before the fire began to whittle the rough sawn ends over the hearth. His mother grew nervous. Miss Fortune bore it as she would have borne it from no one else, but vexation was gathering in her breast for the first occasion. Presently Ellen's voice was heard singing down the stairs.

"I'd give something to stop that child's pipe!" said Miss Fortune; "she's eternally singing the same thing over and over—something about 'a charge to keep'—I'd a good notion to give her a charge to keep this morning; it would have been to hold her tongue."

"That would have been a public loss, *I* think," said Mr. Van Brunt gravely.

"Well you *are* making a precious litter!" said the lady, turning short upon him.

"Never mind," said he in the same tone,—"it's nothing but what the fire'll burn up anyhow;—don't worry yourself about it."

Just as Ellen came in, so did Nancy by the other door.

"What are you here for?" said Miss Fortune with an ireful face.

"Oh!—Come to see the folks and get some peaches," said Nancy;—"come to help along, to be sure."

"Aint your grandma coming?"

"No ma'am, she aint. I knew she wouldn't be of much use, so I thought I wouldn't ask her."

Miss Fortune immediately ordered her out. Half laughing, half serious, Nancy tried to keep her ground, but Miss Fortune was in no mood to hear parleying. She laid violent hands on the passive Nancy, and between pulling and pushing at last got her out and shut the door. Her next sudden move was to haul off her mother to bed. Ellen looked her sorrow at this, and Mr. Van Brunt whistled *his* thoughts; but that either made nothing, or made Miss Fortune more determined. Off she went with her old mother under her arm. While she was gone Ellen brought the broom to sweep up the hearth, but Mr. Van Brunt would not let her.

"No," said he,—"it's more than you nor I can do. You know," said he with a sly look, "we might sweep up the shavings into the wrong corner!"

This entirely overset Ellen's gravity, and unluckily she could not get it back again, even though warned by Mrs. Van Brunt that her aunt was coming. Trying only made it worse, and Miss Fortune's entrance was but the signal for a fresh burst of hearty merriment. What she was laughing at was of course instantly asked, in no pleased tone of voice. Ellen could not tell; and her silence and blushing only made her aunt more curious.

"Come, leave bothering her," said Mr. Van Brunt at last, "she was only laughing at some of my nonsense, and she won't tell on me."

"Will you swear to that?" said the lady sharply.

"Humph!—no, I won't swear; unless you will go before a magistrate with me;—but it is true."

"I wonder if you think I am as easy blinded as all that comes to!" said Miss Fortune scornfully.

And Ellen saw that her aunt's displeasure was all gathered upon her for the evening. She was thinking of Alice's words and trying to arm herself with patience and gentleness, when the door opened, and in walked Nancy as demurely as if nobody had ever seen her before.

"Miss Fortune, granny sent me to tell you she is sorry she can't come to-night—she don't think it would do for her to be out so late,—she's a little touch of the rheumatics, she says."

"Very well," said Miss Fortune. "Now clear out!"

"You had better not say so Miss Fortune—I'll do as much for you as any two of the rest,—see if I don't!"

"I don't care—if you did as much as fifty!" said Miss Fortune impatiently. "I won't have you here; so go, or I'll give you something to help you along."

Nancy saw she had no chance with Miss Fortune in her present humor, and went quietly out. A little while after Ellen was standing at the window from which through the shed window she had a view of the chip yard, and there she saw Nancy lingering still, walking round and round in a circle, and kicking the snow with her feet in a discontented fashion.

"I am very glad she isn't going to be here," thought Ellen. "But poor thing! I dare say she is very much disappointed. And how sorry she will feel going back all that long long way home!—what if I should get her leave to stay? wouldn't it be a fine way of returning good for evil?—But oh dear! I don't want her here!—But that's no matter—"

The next minute Mr. Van Brunt was half startled by Ellen's hand on his shoulder, and the softest of whispers in his ear. He looked up, very much surprised.

"Why, do *you* want her?" said he, likewise in a low tone.

"No," said Ellen, "but I know I should feel very sorry if I was in her place."

Mr. Van Brunt whistled quietly to himself. "Well!" said he, "you *are* a good-natured piece."

"Miss Fortune," said he presently, "if that mischievous girl comes in again I recommend you to let her stay."

"Why?"

"'Cause it's true what she said—she'll do you as much good as half a dozen. She'll behave herself this evening, I'll engage, or if she don't I'll make her."

"She's too impudent to live! But I don't care—her grandmother is another sort,—but I guess she is gone by this time."

Ellen waited only till her aunt's back was turned. She slipped down stairs and out at the kitchen door, and ran up the slope to the fence of the chip-yard.

"Nancy—Nancy!"

"What?" said Nancy, wheeling about.

"If you go in now I guess aunt Fortune will let you stay."

"What makes you think so?" said the other surlily.

"'Cause Mr. Van Brunt was speaking to her about it. Go in and you'll see."

Nancy looked doubtfully at Ellen's face, and then ran hastily in. More slowly Ellen went back by the way she came. When she reached the upper kitchen she found Nancy as busy as possible,—as much at home already as if she had been there all day; helping to set the table in the hall, and going to and fro between that and the buttery with an important face. Ellen was not suffered to help, nor even to stand and see what was doing; so she sat down in the corner by her old friend Mrs. Van Brunt, and with her head in her lap watched by the fire-light the busy figures that went back and forward, and Mr. Van Brunt who still sat working at his bits of board. There were pleasant thoughts in Ellen's head that kept the dancing blaze company. Mr. Van Brunt once looked up and asked her what she was smiling at; the smile brightened at his question, but he got no more answer.

At last the supper was all set out in the hall so that it could very easily be brought into the parlor when the time came; the waiter with the best cups and saucers, which always stood covered with a napkin on the table in the front room, was carried away; the great pile of wood in the parlor fire-place, built ever since morning, was kindled; all was in apple-pie order, and nothing was left but to sweep up the shavings that Mr. Van Brunt had made. This was done; and then Nancy seized hold of Ellen.

"Come along," said she, pulling her to the window,—"come along and let us watch the folks come in."

"But it isn't time for them to be here yet," said Ellen; "the fire is only just burning."

"Fiddle-de-dee! they won't wait for the fire to burn, I can tell you. They'll be along directly, some of them. I wonder what Miss Fortune is thinking of,—that fire had ought to have been burning this long time ago,—but they won't set to work till they all get here, that's one thing. Do you know what's going to be for supper?"

"No."

"Not a bit?"

"No."

"Aint that funny! Then I'm better off than you. I say, Ellen, any one would think *I* was Miss Fortune's niece and you was somebody else, wouldn't they? Goodness! I'm glad I aint. I am going to make part of the supper myself,—what do you think of that? Miss Fortune always has grand suppers—when she has 'em at all; 'taint very often, that's one thing. I wish she'd have a bee every week, I know, and let me come and help. Hark!—didn't I tell you? there's somebody coming this minute; don't you hear the sleigh-bells? I'll tell you who it is now; it's the Lawsons; you see if it aint. It's good it's such a bright night—we can see 'em first-rate. There—here they come—just as I told you—here's Mimy Lawson the first one—if there's anybody I do despise it's Mimy Lawson."

"Hush!" said Ellen. The door opened and the lady herself walked in, followed by three others—large tall women, muffled from head to foot against the cold. The quiet kitchen was speedily changed into a scene of bustle. Loud talking and laughing—a vast deal of unrobing—pushing back and pulling up chairs on the hearth—and Nancy and Ellen running in and out of the room with countless wrappers, cloaks, shawls, comforters, hoods, mittens, and moccasins.

"What a precious muss it will be to get 'em all their own things when they come to go away again," said Nancy. "Throw 'em all down there Ellen, in that heap. Now come quick—somebody else 'll be here directly."

"Which is Miss Mimy?" said Ellen.

"That big ugly woman in the purple frock. The one next her is Kitty—the black-haired one is Mary, and 'tother is Fanny. Ugh! don't look at 'em; I can't bear 'em."

"Why?"

"'Cause I don't, I can tell you; reason good. They are as stingy as they can live. Their way is to get as much as they can out of other folks, and let other folks get as little as they can out of them. I know 'em. Just watch that purple frock when it comes to the eating. There's Mr. Bob."

"Mr. who?"

"Bob—Bob Lawson. He's a precious small young man, for such a big one. There—go take his hat. Miss Fortune," said Nancy coming forward, "mayn't the gentlemen take care of their own things in the stoop, or must the young ladies wait upon them too? 'tother room won't hold everything neither."

This speech raised a general laugh, in the midst of which Mr. Bob carried his own hat and cloak into the shed as desired. Before Nancy had done chuckling came another arrival; a tall lank gentleman, with one of those unhappy-shaped faces that are very broad at the eyes and very narrow across the chops, and having a particularly grave and dull expression. He was welcomed with such a shout of mingled laughter, greeting, and jesting, that the room was in a complete hurly-burly; and a plain-looking stout elderly lady, who had come in just behind him, was suffered to stand unnoticed.

"It's Miss Janet," whispered Nancy,—Mr. Marshchalk's aunt. Nobody wants to see her here; she's one of your pious kind, and that's a kind your aunt don't take to."

Instantly Ellen was at her side, offering gently to relieve her of hood and cloak, and with a tap on his arm drawing Mr. Van Brunt's attention to the neglected person.

Quite touched by the respectful politeness of her manner, the old lady inquired of Miss Fortune as Ellen went off with a load of mufflers, "who was that sweet little thing?"

"It's a kind of sweetmeats that is kept for company, Miss Janet," replied Miss Fortune with a darkened brow.

"She's too good for every-day use, that's a fact," remarked Mr. Van Brunt.

Miss Fortune colored and tossed her head, and the company were for a moment still with surprise. Another arrival set them agoing again.

"Here come the Hitchcocks, Ellen," said Nancy. "Walk

in Miss Mary—walk in Miss Jenny—Mr. Marshchalk has been here this great while."

Miss Mary Hitchcock was in nothing remarkable. Miss Jenny when her wrappers were taken off showed a neat little round figure, and a round face of very bright and good-humored expression. It fastened Ellen's eye, till Nancy whispered her to look at Mr. Juniper Hitchcock, and that young gentleman entered dressed in the last style of elegance. His hair was arranged in a faultless manner—unless perhaps it had a *little* too much of the tallow candle ; for when he had sat for a while before the fire it had somewhat the look of being excessively wet with perspiration. His boots were as shiny as his hair ; his waistcoat was of a startling pattern ; his pantaloons were very tightly strapped down ; and at the end of a showy watch-riband hung some showy seals.

The kitchen was now one buzz of talk and good-humor. Ellen stood half smiling herself to see the universal smile, when Nancy twitched her.

"Here's more coming—Cilly Denison, I guess—no, it's too tall ;—*who* is it ?"

But Ellen flung open the door with a half-uttered scream and threw herself into the arms of Alice, and then led her in ; her face full of such extreme joy that it was perhaps one reason why her aunt's wore a very doubtful air as she came forward. That could not stand however against the graceful politeness and pleasantness of Alice's greeting. Miss Fortune's brow smoothed, her voice cleared, she told Miss Humphreys she was very welcome, and she meant it. Clinging close to her friend as she went from one to another, Ellen was delighted to see that every one echoed the welcome. Every face brightened at meeting hers, every eye softened, and Jenny Hitchcock even threw her arms round Alice and kissed her.

Ellen left now the window to Nancy and stood fast by her adopted sister, with a face of satisfaction it was pleasant to see, watching her very lips as they moved. Soon the door opened again, and various voices hailed the new-comer as "Jane," "Jany," and "Jane Huff." She was a decidedly plain-looking country girl, but when she came near Ellen saw a sober sensible face and a look of thorough good-nature which immediately ranked her next to Jenny Hitchcock in

her fancy. Mr. Bill Huff followed, a sturdy young man; quite as plain and hardly so sensible-looking, he was still more shining with good-nature. He made no pretension to the elegance of Mr. Juniper Hitchcock; but before the evening was over, Ellen had a vastly greater respect for him.

Last, not least, came the Dennisons; it took Ellen some time to make up her mind about them. Miss Cilly, or Cecilia, was certainly very elegant indeed. Her hair was in the extremest state of nicety, with a little round curl plastered in front of each ear; how she coaxed them to stay there Ellen could not conceive. She wore a real watch, there was no doubt of that, and there was even a ring on one of her fingers with two or three blue and red stones in it. Her dress was smart, and so was her figure, and her face was pretty; and Ellen overheard one of the Lawsons whisper to Jenny Hitchcock that "there wasn't a greater lady in the land than Cilly Dennison." Her brother was very different; tall and athletic, and rather handsome, *he* made no pretension to be a gentleman. He valued his fine farming and fine cattle a great deal higher than Juniper Hitchcock's gentility.

CHAPTER XXV.

Wi' merry sangs, an' friendly cracks
I wat they didna weary ;
An' unco tales, an' funnie jokes,
Their sports were cheap an' cheery.

BURNS.

As the party were all gathered it was time to set to work. The fire in the front room was burning up finely now, but Miss Fortune had no idea of having pork-chopping or apple-paring done there. One party was despatched down stairs into the lower kitchen; the others made a circle round the fire. Every one was furnished with a sharp knife, and a basket of apples was given to each two or three. Now it would be hard to say whether talking or working went on best. Not faster moved the tongues than the fingers; not smoother went the knives than the flow of talk; while there was a constant leaping of quarters of apples from the hands that had prepared them into the bowls, trays, or what-not, that stood on the hearth to receive them. Ellen had nothing to do; her aunt had managed it so, though she would gladly have shared the work that looked so pretty and pleasant in other people's hands. Miss Fortune would not let her; so she watched the rest, and amused herself as well as she could with hearing and seeing; and standing between Alice and Jenny Hitchcock, she handed them the apples out of the basket as fast as they were ready for them. It was a pleasant evening that. Laughing and talking went on so merrily; stories were told; anecdotes, gossip, jokes, passed from mouth to mouth; and not one made himself so agreeable, or had so much to do with the life and pleasure of the party, as Alice. Ellen saw it, delighted. The pared apples kept dancing into the bowls and trays; the baskets got empty surprisingly fast; Nancy and Ellen had to run to the barrels in the shed again and again for fresh supplies.

"Do they mean to do all these to-night?" said Ellen to Nancy on one of these occasions.

"I don't know what *they* mean, I am sure," replied Nancy, diving down into the barrel to reach the apples;—"if you had asked me what *Miss Fortune* meant, I might ha' given a guess."

"But only look," said Ellen,—"only so many done, and all these to do!—Well, I know what 'busy as a bee' means now, if I never did before."

"You'll know it better to-morrow, I can tell you."

"Why?"

"O wait till you see. I wouldn't be you to-morrow for something though. Do you like sewing?"

"Sewing!" said Ellen. But "Girls! girls!—what *are* you leaving the door open for!"—sounded from the kitchen, and they hurried in.

"'Most got through, Nancy?" inquired Bob Lawson. (Miss Fortune had gone down stairs.)

"Ha'n't begun to, Mr. Lawson. There's every bit as many to do as there was at your house 'tother night."

"What on airth does she want with such a sight of 'em," inquired Dan Dennison.

"Live on pies and apple-sass till next summer," suggested Mimy Lawson.

"That's the stuff for my money!" replied her brother; "'taters and apple-sass is my sass in the winter."

"It's good those is easy got," said his sister Mary; "the sass is the most of the dinner to Bob most commonly."

"Are they fixing for more apple-sass down stairs?" Mr. Dennison went on rather dryly.

"No—hush!"—said Juniper Hitchcock,—"sassages!"

"Humph!" said Dan, as he speared up an apple out of the basket on the point of his knife,—"aint that something like what you call killing two ——"

"Just that exactly," said Jenny Hitchcock, as Dan broke off short, and the mistress of the house walked in. "Ellen," she whispered, "don't you want to go down stairs and see when the folks are coming up to help us? And tell the doctor he must be spry, for we aint a-going to get through in a hurry," she added laughing.

"Which is the doctor ma'am?"

"The doctor—Doctor Marshchalk—don't you know?"

"Is he a doctor?" said Alice.

"No, not exactly I suppose, but he's just as good as the real. He's a natural knack at putting bones in their places and all that sort of thing. There was a man broke his leg horribly at Thirlwall the other day, and Gibson was out of the way, and Marshchalk set it, and did it famously they said. So go Ellen, and bring us word what they are all about."

Mr. Van Brunt was head of the party in the lower kitchen. He stood at one end of the table, cutting with his huge knife the hard-frozen pork into very thin slices, which the rest of the company took and before they had time to thaw cut up into small dice on the little boards Mr. Van Brunt had prepared. As large a fire as the chimney would hold was built up and blazing finely; the room looked as cozy and bright as the one up stairs, and the people as busy and as talkative. They had less to do however, or they had been more smart, for they were drawing to the end of their chopping; of which Miss Janet declared herself very glad, for she said "the wind came sweeping in under the doors and freezing her feet the whole time, and she was sure the biggest fire ever was built couldn't warm that room;" an opinion in which Mrs. Van Brunt agreed perfectly. Miss Janet no sooner spied Ellen standing in the chimney-corner than she called her to her side, kissed her, and talked to her a long time, and finally fumbling in her pocket brought forth an odd little three-cornered pin-cushion which she gave her for a keep-sake. Jane Huff and her brother also took kind notice of her; and Ellen began to think the world was full of nice people. About half-past eight the choppers went up and joined the company who were paring apples; the circle was a very large one now, and the buzz of tongues grew quite furious.

"What are you smiling at?" asked Alice of Ellen, who stood at her elbow.

"O I don't know," said Ellen, smiling more broadly; and presently added,—"they're all so kind to me."

"Who?"

"O everybody—Miss Jenny, and Miss Jane Huff, and Miss Janet, and Mrs. Van Brunt, and Mr. Huff,—they all speak so kindly and look so kindly at me. But it's very

funny what a notion people have for kissing—I wish they hadn't—I've run away from three kisses already, and I'm so afraid somebody else will try next."

"You don't seem very bitterly displeased," said Alice smiling.

"I am though,—I can't bear it," said Ellen laughing and blushing. "There's Mr. Dennison caught me in the first place and tried to kiss me, but I tried so hard to get away I believe he saw I was really in good earnest and let me go. And just now,—only think of it,—while I was standing talking to Miss Jane Huff down stairs, her brother caught me and kissed me before I knew what he was going to do. I declare it's too bad!" said Ellen, rubbing her cheek very hard as if she would rub off the affront.

"You must let it pass my dear; it is one way of expressing kindness. They feel kindly towards you or they would not do it."

"Then I wish they wouldn't feel quite so kindly," said Ellen,—"that's all. Hark!—what was that?"

"What is that?" said somebody else, and instantly there was silence, broken again after a minute or two by the faint blast of a horn.

"It's old Father Swaim, I reckon," said Mr. Van Brunt; "I'll go fetch him in."

"O yes! bring him in—bring him in," was heard on all sides.

"That horn makes me think of what happened to me once," said Jenny Hitchcock to Ellen. "I was a little girl at school, not so big as you are,—and one afternoon when we were all as still as mice and studying away, we heard Father Swaim's horn"—

"What does he blow it for?" said Ellen, as Jenny stooped for her knife which she had let fall.

"O to let people know he's there, you know; did you never see Father Swaim?"

"No."

"La! he's the funniest old fellow! He goes round and round the country carrying the newspapers; and we get him to bring us our letters from the post-office, when there are any. He carries 'em in a pair of saddlebags hanging across that old white horse of his—I don't think that horse will ever

grow old, no more than his master,—and in summer he has a stick—so long—with a horse's tail tied to the end of it, to brush away the flies, for the poor horse has had *his* tail cut off pretty short. I wonder if it isn't the very same," said Jenny, laughing heartily; "Father Swaim thought he could manage it best, I guess."

"But what was it that happened to you that time at school?" said Ellen.

"Why when we heard the horn blow, our master, the schoolmaster you know, went out to get a paper; and I was tired with sitting still, so I jumped up and ran across the room and then back again, and over and back again, five or six times; and when he came in one of the girls up and told of it. It was Fanny Lawson," said Jenny in a whisper to Alice, "and I think she aint much different now from what she was then. I can hear her now,—'Mr. Starks, Jenny Hitchcock's been running all round the room.' Well what do you think he did to me? He took hold of my two hands and swung me round and round by my arms till I didn't know which was head and which was feet."

"What a queer schoolmaster!" said Ellen.

"Queer enough; you may say that. His name was Starks;—the boys used to call him Starksification. We did hate him, that's a fact. I'll tell you what he did to a black boy of ours—you know our black Sam, Alice?—I forget what he had been doing; but Starks took him so—by the rims of his ears—and danced him up and down upon the floor."

"But didn't that hurt him?"

"Hurt him! I guess it did! he meant it should. He tied me under the table once. Sometimes when he wanted to punish two boys at a time he would set them to spit in each other's faces."

"O don't tell me about him!" cried Ellen with a face of horror; "I don't like to hear it."

Jenny laughed; and just then the door opened and Mr. Van Brunt and the old news-carrier came in.

He was a venerable mild-looking old man, with thin hair as white as snow. He wore a long snuff-colored coat, and a broad-brimmed hat, the sides of which were oddly looped up to the crown with twine; his tin horn or trumpet was in his hand. His saddle-bags were on Mr. Van Brunt's arm. As

soon as she saw him Ellen was fevered with the notion that perhaps he had something for her; and she forgot everything else. It would seem that the rest of the company had the same hope, for they crowded round him shouting out welcomes and questions and inquiries for letters, all in a breath.

"Softly—softly"—said the old man sitting down slowly; "not all at once; I can't attend to you all at once;—one at a time—one at a time."

"Don't attend to 'em at all till you're ready," said Miss Fortune,—"let 'em wait." And she handed him a glass of cider.

He drank it off at a breath, smacking his lips as he gave back the glass to her hand, and exclaiming, "That's prime!" Then taking up his saddlebags from the floor he began slowly to undo the fastenings.

"You are going to our house to-night, aint you Father Swaim?" said Jenny.

"That's where I *was* a going," said the old man, "I *was* a going to stop with your father, Miss Jenny; but since I've got into farmer Van Brunt's hands I don't know any more what's going to become of me;—and after that glass of cider I don't much care! Now let's see,—let's see—'Miss Jenny Hitchcock,'—here's something for you. I should like to know very much what's inside of that letter—there's a blue seal to it. Ah, young folks!—young folks!"

Jenny received her letter amidst a great deal of laughing and joking, and seemed herself quite as much amused as anybody.

"'Jedediah B. Lawson,'—there's for your father, Miss Mimy; that saves me a long tramp—if you've twenty-one cents in your pocket, that is; if you ha'n't I shall be obleeged to tramp after that. Here's something for 'most all of you, I'm thinking. 'Miss Cecilia Dennison,'—your fair hands—how's the Squire?—rheumatism, eh? I think I'm a younger man now than your father, Cecilly; and yet I must ha' seen a good many years more than Squire Dennison;—I must surely. 'Miss Fortune Emerson,'—that's for you; a double letter ma'am."

Ellen with a beating heart had pressed nearer and nearer to the old man till she stood close by his right hand and could see every letter as he handed it out. A spot of deep-

ening red was on each cheek as her eye eagerly scanned letter after letter; it spread to a sudden flush when the last name was read. Alice watched in some anxiety her keen look as it followed the letter from the old man's hand to her aunt's, and thence to the pocket where Miss Fortune coolly bestowed it. Ellen could not stand this; she sprang forward across the circle.

"Aunt Fortune, there's a letter inside of that for me—won't you give it to me?—won't you give it to me?" she repeated trembling.

Her aunt did not notice her by so much as a look; she turned away and began talking to some one else. The red had left Ellen's face when Alice could see it again;—it was livid and spotted from stifled passion. She stood in a kind of maze. But as her eye caught Alice's anxious and sorrowful look she covered her face with her hands, and as quick as possible made her escape out of the room.

For some minutes Alice heard none of the hubbub around her. Then came a knock at the door, and the voice of Thomas Grimes saying to Mr. Van Brunt that Miss Humphreys' horse was there.

"Mr. Swaim," said Alice rising, "I don't like to leave you with these gay friends of ours; you'll stand no chance of rest with them to-night. Will you ride home with me?"

Many of the party began to beg Alice would stay to supper, but she said her father would be uneasy. The old newscarrier concluded to go with her, for he said "there was a pint he wanted to mention to parson Humphreys that he had forgotten to bring for'ard when they were talking on that 'ere subject two months ago." So Nancy brought her things from the next room and helped her on with them, and looked pleased, as well she might, at the smile and kind words with which she was rewarded. Alice lingered at her leave-takings, hoping to see Ellen; but it was not till the last moment that Ellen came in. She did not say a word; but the two little arms were put round Alice's neck and held her with a long close earnestness which did not pass from her mind all the evening afterward.

When she was gone the company sat down again to business; and apple-paring went on more steadily than ever for a while, till the bottom of the barrels was seen, and the last

basketful of apples was duly emptied. Then there was a general shout; the kitchen was quickly cleared, and everybody's face brightened, as much as to say, "Now for fun!" While Ellen and Nancy and Miss Fortune and Mrs. Van Brunt were running all ways with trays, pans, baskets, knives, and buckets, the fun began by Mr. Juniper Hitchcock's whistling in his dog and setting him to do various feats for the amusement of the company. There followed such a rushing, caping, barking, laughing and scolding, on the part of the dog and his admirers, that the room was in an uproar. He jumped over a stick; he got into a chair and sat up on two legs; he kissed the ladies' hands; he suffered an apple-paring to be laid across his nose, then threw it up with a jerk and caught it in his mouth. Nothing very remarkable certainly, but, as Miss Fortune observed to somebody, "if he had been the learned pig there couldn't ha' been more fuss made over him."

Ellen stood looking on, smiling partly at the dog and his master, and partly at the antics of the company. Presently Mr. Van Brunt bending down to her said,

"What is the matter with your eyes?"

"Nothing," said Ellen starting,—"at least nothing that's any matter I mean."

"Come here," said he, drawing her a one side; "tell me all about it—what is the matter?"

"Never mind—please don't ask me Mr. Van Brunt—it's nothing I ought to tell you—it isn't any matter."

But her eyes were full again, and he still held her fast doubtfully.

"*I'll* tell you about it, Mr. Van Brunt," said Nancy as she came past them,—"you let her go, and I'll tell you by-and-by."

And Ellen tried in vain afterwards to make her promise she would not.

"Come, June," said Miss Jenny, "we have got enough of you and Jumper—turn him out; we are going to have the cat now. Come!—Puss puss in the corner! Go off in 'tother room, will you, everybody that don't want to play. Puss, puss?—"

Now the fun began in good earnest, and few minutes had passed before Ellen was laughing with all her heart, as if she

never had had anything to cry for in her life. After "puss, puss in the corner" came "blind man's buff;" and this was played with great spirit, the two most distinguished being Nancy and Dan Dennison, though Miss Fortune played admirably well. Ellen had seen Nancy play before; but she forgot her own part of the game in sheer amazement at the way Mr. Dennison managed his long body, which seemed to go where there was no room for it, and vanish into air just when the grasp of some grasping "blind man" was ready to fasten upon him. And when *he* was blinded, he seemed to know by instinct where the walls were, and keeping clear of them he would swoop like a hawk from one end of the room to the other, pouncing upon the unlucky people who could by no means get out of the way fast enough. When this had lasted a while there was a general call for "the fox and the goose;" and Miss Fortune was pitched upon for the latter; she having in the other game showed herself capable of good generalship. But who for the fox? Mr. Van Brunt?

"Not I," said Mr. Van Brunt,—"there aint nothing of the fox about me; Miss Fortune would beat me all hollow."

"Who then, farmer?" said Bill Huff;—"come! who is the fox? Will I do?"

"Not you, Bill; the goose 'ud be too much for you."

There was a general shout, and cries of "who then?" "who then?"

"Dan Dennison," said Mr. Van Brunt. "Now look out for a sharp fight."

Amidst a great deal of laughing and confusion the line was formed, each person taking hold of a handkerchief or band passed round the waist of the person before him, except when the women held by each other's skirts. They were ranged according to height, the tallest being next their leader the "goose." Mr. Van Brunt and the elder ladies, and two or three more, chose to be lookers-on, and took post outside the door.

Mr. Dennison began by taking off his coat, to give himself more freedom in his movements; for his business was to catch the train of the goose, one by one, as each in turn became the hindmost; while *her* object was to baffle him and keep her family together, meeting him with outspread arms at every rush he made tc seize one of her brood; while the

long train behind her, following her quick movements and swaying from side to side to get out of the reach of the furious fox, was sometimes in the shape of the letter C, and sometimes in that of the letter S, and sometimes looked like a long snake with a curling tail. Loud was the laughter, shrill the shrieks, as the fox drove them hither and thither, and seemed to be in all parts of the room at once. He was a cunning fox that, as well as a bold one. Sometimes, when they thought him quite safe, held at bay by the goose, he dived under or leaped over her outstretched arms and *almost* snatched hold of little Ellen, who being the least was the last one of the party. But Ellen played very well, and just escaped him two or three times, till he declared she gave him so much trouble that when he caught her he would "kiss her the worst kind." Ellen played none the worse for that; however she was caught at last, and kissed too; there was no help for it; so she bore it as well as she could. Then she watched, and laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks to see how the fox and the goose dodged each other, what tricks were played, and how the long train pulled each other about. At length Nancy was caught; and then Jenny Hitchcock; and then Cecilia Dennison, and then Jane Huff, and so on, till at last the fox and the goose had a long struggle for Mimy Lawson, which would never have come to an end if Mimy had not gone over to the enemy.

There was a general pause. The hot and tired company were seated round the room, panting and fanning themselves with their pocket-handkerchiefs, and speaking in broken sentences; glad to rest even from laughing. Miss Fortune had thrown herself down on a seat close by Ellen, when Nancy came up and softly asked, "Is it time to beat the eggs now?" Miss Fortune nodded, and then drew her close to receive a long low whisper in her ear, at the end of which Nancy ran off.

"Is there anything *I* can do, aunt Fortune?" said Ellen, so gently and timidly that it ought to have won a kind answer.

"Yes," said her aunt,—"you may go and put yourself to bed; it's high time long ago." And looking round as she moved off she added "Go!"—with a little nod that as much as said, "I am in earnest."

Ellen's heart throbbed; she stood doubtful. One word to Mr. Van Brunt and she need not go,—that she knew. But as surely too that word would make trouble and do harm. And then she remembered "A charge to keep I have!"—She turned quick and quitted the room.

Ellen sat down on the first stair she came to, for her bosom was heaving up and down, and she was determined not to cry. The sounds of talking and laughing came to her ear from the parlor, and there at her side stood the covered-up supper;—for a few minutes it was hard work to keep her resolve. The thick breath came and went very fast. Through the fanlights of the hall-door, opposite to which she was sitting, the bright moonlight streamed in;—and presently, as Ellen quieted, it seemed to her fancy like a gentle messenger from its Maker, bidding his child remember him;—and then came up some words in her memory that her mother's lips had fastened there long ago;—"I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." She remembered her mother had told her it is Jesus who says this. Her lost pleasure was well nigh forgotten; and yet as she sat gazing into the moonlight Ellen's eyes were gathering tears very fast.

"Well, I *am* seeking him," she thought,—"can it be that he loves me!—Oh I'm so glad!"

And they were glad tears that little Ellen wiped away as she went up stairs; for it was too cold to sit there long if the moon was ever so bright.

She had her hand on the latch of her door when her grandmother called out from the other room to know who was there.

"It's I, grandma.

"Aint somebody there? Come in here—who is it?"

"It's I, grandma," said Ellen, coming to the door.

"Come in here deary," said the old woman in a lower tone,—"what is it all? what's the matter? who's down stairs?"

"It's a bee, grandma; there's nothing the matter."

"A bee! who's been stung? what's all the noise about?"

"'Tisn't that kind of bee, grandma; don't you know? there's a parcel of people that came to pare apples, and they've been playing games in the parlor—that's all."

"Paring apples, eh? Is there company below?"

"Yes ma'am; a whole parcel of people."

"Dear me!" said the old lady, "I oughtn't to ha' been abed! Why ha'n't Fortune called me? I'll get right up. Ellen you go in that fur closet and bring me my paddysoy that hangs there, and then help me on with my things; I'll get right up. Dear me! what was Fortune thinking about?"

The moonlight served very well instead of candles. After twice bringing the wrong dresses Ellen at last hit upon the "paddysoy," which the old lady knew immediately by the touch. In haste, and not without some fear and trembling on Ellen's part, she was arrayed in it; her best cap put on, not over hair in the best order Ellen feared, but the old lady would not stay to have it made better; Ellen took care of her down the stairs, and after opening the door for her went back to her room.

A little while had passed, and Ellen was just tying her night-cap strings and ready to go peacefully to sleep, when Nancy burst in.

"Ellen! Hurry! you must come right down stairs."

"Down stairs!—why, I am just ready to go to bed."

"No matter—you must come right away down. There's Mr. Van Brunt says he won't begin supper till you come."

"But does aunt Fortune want me to?"

"Yes, I tell you! and the quicker you come the better she'll be pleased. She sent me after you in all sorts of a hurry. She said she didn't know where you was."

"Said she didn't know where I was! Why she told me herself ——" Ellen began and stopped short.

"Of course!" said Nancy, "don't you think I know that? But *he* don't, and if you want to plague her you'll just tell him. Now come and be quick, will you. The supper's splendid."

Ellen lost the first view of the table, for everything had begun to be pulled to pieces before she came in. The company were all crowded round the table, eating and talking and helping themselves; and ham and bread and butter, pumpkin pies and mince pies and apple pies, cake of various kinds, and glasses of egg nogg and cider were in everybody's hands. One dish in the middle of the table had won the praise of every tongue; nobody could guess and many asked how it was made, but Miss Fortune kept a satisfied silence, pleased to see the constant stream of comers to the big dish

till it was near empty. Just then Mr. Van Brunt seeing Ellen had nothing gathered up all that was left and gave it to her.

It was sweet and cold and rich. Ellen told her mother afterwards it was the best thing she had ever tasted except the ice-cream she once gave her in New York. She had taken however but one spoonful when her eye fell upon Nancy, standing back of all the company, and forgotten. Nancy had been upon her good behavior all the evening, and it was a singular proof of this that she had not pushed in and helped herself among the first. Ellen's eye went once or twice from her plate to Nancy, and then she crossed over and offered it to her. It was eagerly taken, and a little disappointed Ellen stepped back again. But she soon forgot the disappointment. "She'll know now that I don't bear her any grudge," she thought.

"Ha'n't you got nothing?" said Nancy coming up presently; "that wasn't your'n that you gave me, was it?"

Ellen nodded smilingly.

"Well there aint no more of it," said Nancy. "The bowl is empty."

"I know it," said Ellen.

"Why, didn't you like it?"

"Yes—very much."

"Why you're a queer little fish," said Nancy. "What did you get Mr. Van Brunt to let me in for?"

"How did you know I did?"

"'Cause he told me. Say—what did you do it for? Mr. Dennison, won't you give Ellen a piece of cake or something? Here—take this," said Nancy, pouncing upon a glass of egg nogg which a gap in the company enabled her to reach; "I made it more than half myself. Aint it good?"

"Yes, very," said Ellen, smacking her lips;—"what's in it?"

"O plenty of good things. But what made you ask Mr. Van Brunt to let me stop to-night? you didn't tell me—did you want me to-stay?"

"Never mind," said Ellen; "don't ask me any questions."

"Yes but I will though, and you've got to answer me. Why did you? Come!—do you like me?—say?"

"I should like you I dare say, if you would be different."

"Well, I don't care," said Nancy, after a little pause,—"I like *you*, though you're as queer as you can be. I don't care whether you like me or not. Look here, Ellen, *that* cake there is the best—I know it is, for I've tried 'em all. —You know I told Van Brunt I would tell him what you were crying about?"

"Yes, and I asked you not. Did you?"

Nancy nodded, being at the moment still further engaged in "trying" the cake.

"I am sorry you did. What did he say?"

"He didn't say much to *me*—somebody else will hear of it, I guess. He *was* mad about it, or I am mistaken. What makes you sorry?"

"It will only do harm and make aunt Fortune angry."

"Well that's just what I should like if I were you. I can't make you out."

"I'd a great deal rather have her like me," said Ellen. "Was she vexed when grandma came down?"

"I don't know, but she had to keep it to herself if she was; everybody else was so glad, and Mr. Van Brunt made such a fuss. Just look at the old lady, how pleased she is. I declare if the folks aint talking of going! Come Ellen! now for the cloaks! you and me 'll finish our supper afterwards."

That however was not to be. Nancy was offered a ride home to Mrs. Van Brunt's and a lodging there. They were ready cloaked and shawled, and Ellen was still hunting for Miss Janet's things in the moonlit hall, when she heard Nancy close by, in a lower tone than common, say,

"Ellen—will you kiss me?"

Ellen dropped her armful of things and taking Nancy's hands gave her truly the kiss of peace.

When she went up to undress for the second time she found on her bed—her letter! And with tears Ellen kneeled down and gave earnest thanks for this blessing, and that she had been able to gain Nancy's good-will.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"He was a gentleman on whom I built an absolute trust."

MACBETH.

It was Tuesday the 22nd of December, and late in the day. Not a pleasant afternoon. The gray snow-clouds hung low; the air was keen and raw. It was already growing dark, and Alice was sitting alone in the firelight, when two little feet came running round the corner of the house; the glass door opened and Ellen rushed in.

"I have come! I have come!" she exclaimed. "O dear Alice! I'm so glad!"

So was Alice if her kiss meant anything.

"But how late, my child! how late you are."

"O I thought I never was going to get done," said Ellen, pulling off her things in a great hurry and throwing them on the sofa,—"but I am here at last. O I'm so glad!"

"Why what has been the matter?" said Alice, folding up what Ellen laid down.

"O a great deal of matter—I couldn't think what Nancy meant last night—I know very well now. I sha'n't want to see any more apples all winter. What do you think I have been about all to-day, dear Miss Alice.?"

"Nothing that has done you much harm," said Alice smiling,—"if I am to guess from your looks. You are as rosy as a good Spitzenberg yourself."

"That's very funny," said Ellen laughing, "for aunt Fortune said awhile ago that my cheeks were just the color of two mealy potatoes."

"But about the apples?" said Alice.

"Why this morning I was thinking I would come here so early, when the first thing I knew aunt Fortune brought out all those heaps and heaps of apples into the kitchen, and made me sit down on the floor, and then she gave me a great

big needle and set me to stringing them all together, and as fast as I strung them she hung them up all round the ceiling. I tried very hard to get through before, but I could not, and I am so tired! I thought I never *should* get to the bottom of that big basket."

"Never mind love—come to the fire—we'll try and forget all disagreeable things while we are together."

"I have forgotten it almost already," said Ellen, as she sat down in Alice's lap and laid her face against hers;—"I don't care for it at all now."

But her cheeks were fast fading into the uncomfortable color Miss Fortune had spoken of; and weariness and weakness kept her for a while quiet in Alice's arms, overcoming even the pleasure of talking. They sat so till the clock struck half-past five; then Alice proposed they should go into the kitchen and see Margery, and order the tea made, which she had no doubt Ellen wanted. Margery welcomed her with great cordiality. She liked anybody that Alice liked, but she had besides declared to her husband that Ellen was "an uncommon well-behaved child." She said she would put the tea to draw, and they should have it in a very few minutes.

"But Miss Alice, there's an Irish body out by, waiting to speak to you. I was just coming in to tell you; will you please to see her now?"

"Certainly—let her come in. Is she in the cold Margery?"

"No Miss Alice—there's a fire there this evening. I'll call her."

The woman came up from the lower kitchen at the summons. She was young, rather pretty, and with a pleasant countenance, but unwashed, uncombed, untidy,—no wonder Margery's nicety had shrunk from introducing her into her spotless upper kitchen. The unfailing Irish cloak was drawn about her, the hood brought over her head, and on the head and shoulders the snow lay white, not yet melted away.

"Did you wish to speak to me, my friend?" said Alice pleasantly.

"If ye plase, ma'am, it's the master I'm wanting," said the woman, dropping a curtsey.

"My father? Margery, will you tell him."

Margery departed.

"Come nearer the fire," said Alice,—"and sit down; my father will be here presently. It is snowing again, is it not?"

"It is ma'am;—a bitter storm."

"Have you come far?"

"It's a good bit my lady—it's more nor a mile beyant Carra—just right forgin the ould big hill they call the Catch-back;—in Jemmy Morrison's woods—where Pat M'Farren's clearing is—it's there I live, my lady."

"That is a long distance indeed for a walk in the snow," said Alice kindly; "sit down, and come nearer the fire. Margery will give you something to refresh you."

"I thank ye, my lady, but I want nothing man can give me the night; and when one's on an arrant of life and death, it's little the cold or the storm can do to put out the heart's fire."

"Life and death? who is sick?" said Alice.

"It's my own child, ma'am,—my own boy—all the child I have—and I'll have none by the morning light."

"Is he so ill?" said Alice; "what is the matter with him?"

"Myself doesn't know."

The voice was fainter; the brown cloak was drawn over her face; and Alice and Ellen saw her shoulders heaving with the grief she kept from bursting out. They exchanged glances.

"Sit down," said Alice again presently, laying her hand upon the wet shoulder;—"sit down and rest; my father will be here directly. Margery—oh that's right,—a cup of tea will do her good. What do you want of my father?"

"The Lord bless ye!—I'll tell you my lady."

She drank off the tea, but refused something more substantial that Margery offered her.

"The Lord bless ye! I couldn't. My lady, there wasn't a stronger, nor a prettier, nor a swater child, nor couldn't be, nor he was when we left it—it 'll be three years come the fifteenth of April next; but I'm thinking the bitter winters o' this cowld country has chilled the life out o' him,—and troubles cowlder than all," she added in a lower tone. "I seed him grow waker an' waker an' his daar face grow thinner an' thinner, and the red all left it, only two burning spots was on it some days; an' I worried the life out o' me for him, an' all I could do I couldn't do nothing at all to help him, but he

just growed waker an' waker. I axed the father wouldn't he see the doctor about him, but he's an 'asy kind o' man, my lady, an' he said he would, an' he never did to this day; an' John he always said it was no use sinding for the doctor, an' looked so swate at me, an' said for me not to fret, for sure he'd be better soon, or he'd go to a better place. An' I thought he was like a heavenly angel itself already, an' always was, but then more nor ever. Och! it's soon that he'll be one entirely!—let Father Shannon say what he will."

She sobbed for a minute, while Alice and Ellen looked on, silent and pitying.

"An' to-night, my lady, he's very bad," she went on, wiping away the tears that came quickly again,—"an' I seed he was going fast from me, an' I was breaking my heart wid the loss of him, whin I heard one of the men that was in it say, 'What's this he's saying?' says he. 'An' what is it thin?' says I. 'About the jantleman that praaches at Carra,' says he,—'he's a calling for him,' says he. I knowed there wasn't a praast at all at Carra, an' I thought he was draaming, or out o' his head, or crazy wid his sickness, like; an' I went up close to him, an' says I, 'John,' says I, 'what is it you want,' says I,—'an' sure if it's anything in heaven above or in earth beneath that yer own mother can get for ye,' says I,—'ye shall have it,' says I. An' he put up his two arms to my neck an' pulled my face down to his lips, that was hot wid the faver, an' kissed me—he did—'an', says he, 'Mother daar,' says he,—'if ye love me,' says he, 'fetch me the good jantleman that praaches at Carra till I spake to him.' 'Is it the praast you want, John my boy?' says I,—'sure he's in it,' says I;—for Michael had been for Father Shannon, an' he had come home wid him half an hour before. 'O no mother,' says he, 'it's not him at all that I maan—it's the jantleman that spakes in the little white church at Carra,—he's not a praast at all,' says he. 'An' who is he thin?' says I, getting up from the bed, 'or where will I find him, or how will I get to him?' 'Ye'll not stir a fut for him thin the night Kitty Dolan,' says my husband,—'are ye mad,' says he; 'sure it's not his own head the child has at all at all, or it's a little hiritic he is,' says he; 'an' ye won't show the disrespect to the praast in yer own house.' 'I'm maaning none,' says I,—'nor more he isn't a hiritic, but if he

was, he's a born angel to you Michael Dolan anyhow,' says I; 'an' wid the kiss of his lips on my face wouldn't I do the arrant of my own boy, an' he a dying? by the blessing, an' I will, if twenty men stud between me an' it. So tell me where I'll find him, this praast, if there's the love o' mercy in any sowl o' ye,' says I. But they wouldn't spake a word for me, not one of them; so I axed an' axed at one place an' other, till here I am. An' now, my lady, will the master go for me to my poor boy?—for he'd maybe be dead while I stand here."

"Surely I will," said Mr. Humphreys, who had come in while she was speaking. "Wait but one moment."

In a moment he came back ready, and he and the woman set forth to their walk. Alice looked out anxiously after them.

"It storms very hard," she said,—"and he has not had his tea! But he couldn't wait. Come, Ellen love, we'll have ours. How will he ever get back again! it will be so deep by that time."

There was a cloud on her fair brow for a few minutes, but it passed away, and quiet and calm as ever she sat down at the little tea-table with Ellen. From *her* face all shadows seemed to have flown for ever. Hungry and happy, she enjoyed Margery's good bread and butter, and the nice honey, and from time to time cast very bright looks at the dear face on the other side of the table, which could not help looking bright in reply. Ellen was well pleased for her part that the third seat was empty. But Alice looked thoughtful sometimes as a gust of wind swept by, and once or twice went to the window.

After tea Alice took out her work, and Ellen put herself contentedly down on the rug, and sat leaning back against her. Silent for very contentment for a while, she sat looking gravely into the fire; while Alice's fingers drove a little steel hook through and through some purse silk in a mysterious fashion that no eye could be quick enough to follow, and with such skill and steadiness that the work grew fast under her hand.

"I had such a funny dream last night," said Ellen.

"Did you? what about?"

"It was pleasant too," said Ellen, twisting herself round to talk,—"but very queer. I dreamed about that gentleman

that was so kind to me on board the boat—you know?—I told you about him?"

"Yes, I remember."

"Well, I dreamed of seeing him somewhere, I don't know where,—and he didn't look a bit like himself, only I knew who it was; and I thought I didn't like to speak to him for fear he wouldn't know *me*, but then I thought he did, and came up and took my hand and seemed so glad to see me; and he asked me if I had been *pious* since he saw me."

Ellen stopped to laugh.

"And what did you tell him?"

"I told him yes. And then I thought he seemed so very pleased."

"Dreamers do not always keep close to the truth, it seems."

"*I* didn't," said Ellen. "But then I thought I had, in my dream."

"Had what? kept close to the truth?"

"No, no;—been what he said."

"Dreams are queer things," said Alice.

"I have been far enough from being good to-day," said Ellen thoughtfully.

"How so, my dear?"

"I don't know, Miss Alice—because I never *am* good, I suppose."

"But what has been the matter to-day?"

"Why, those apples! I thought I would come here so early, and then when I found I must do all those baskets of apples first I was very ill-humored; and aunt Fortune saw I was and said something that made me worse. And I tried as hard as I could to get through before dinner, and when I found I couldn't I said I wouldn't come to dinner, but she made me, and that vexed me more, and I wouldn't eat scarcely anything, and then when I got back to the apples again I sewed so hard that I ran the needle into my finger ever so far,—see there? what a mark it left?—and aunt Fortune said it served me right and she was glad of it, and that made me angry. I knew I was wrong, afterwards, and I was very sorry. Isn't it strange, dear Alice, I should do so when I have resolved so hard I wouldn't?"

"Not very, my darling, as long as we have such evil hearts as ours are—it *is* strange they should be so evil."

"I told aunt Fortune afterwards I was sorry, but she said 'actions speak louder than words, and words are cheap.' If she only wouldn't say that just as she does! it does worry me so."

"Patience!" said Alice, passing her hand over Ellen's hair as she sat looking sorrowfully up at her;—"you must try not to give her occasion. Never mind what she says, and overcome evil with good.'

"That is just what mamma said!" exclaimed Ellen, rising to throw her arms round Alice's neck, and kissing her with all the energy of love, gratitude, repentance, and sorrowful recollection.

"O what do you think!" she said suddenly, her face changing again,—"I got my letter last night!"

"Your letter!"

"Yes, the letter the old man brought—don't you know? and it was written on the ship, and there was only a little bit from mamma, and a little bit from papa, but so good! papa says she is a great deal better, and he has no doubt he will bring her back in the spring or summer quite well again. Isn't that good?"

"Very good, dear Ellen. I am very glad for you."

"It was on my bed last night. I can't think how it got there,—and I don't care either, so long as I have got it. What are you making?"

"A purse," said Alice, laying it on the table for her inspection.

"It will be very pretty. Is the other end to be like this?"

"Yes, and these tassels to finish them off."

"O that's beautiful," said Ellen, laying them down to try the effect;—"and these rings to fasten it with. Is it black?"

"No, dark green. I am making it for my brother John."

"A Christmas present!" exclaimed Ellen.

"I am afraid not; he will hardly be here by that time. It may do for New Year."

"How pleasant it must be to make Christmas and New Year presents!" said Ellen, after she had watched Alice's busy fingers for a few minutes. "I wish I could make something for somebody. O I wonder if I couldn't make something for Mr. Van Brunt! O I should like to very much."

Alice smiled at Ellen's very wide-open eyes.

"What could you make for him?"

"I don't know—that's the thing. He keeps his money in his pocket,—and besides, I don't know how to make purses."

"There are other things besides purses. How would a watch-guard do? Does he wear a watch?"

"I don't know whether he does or not; he doesn't every day I am sure, but I don't know about Sundays."

"Then we won't venture upon that. You might knit him a nightcap."

"A nightcap!—You're joking, Alice, aren't you? I don't think a nightcap would be pretty for a Christmas present, do you?"

"Well, what shall we do, Ellen?" said Alice laughing. "I made a pocket-pincushion for papa once when I was a little girl, but I fancy Mr. Van Brunt would not know exactly what use to make of such a convenience. I don't think you could fail to please him though, with anything you should hit upon."

"I have got a dollar," said Ellen, "to buy stuff with; it came in my letter last night. If I only knew what!"

Down she went on the rug again, and Alice worked in silence, while Ellen's thoughts ran over every possible and impossible article of Mr. Van Brunt's dress.

"I have some nice pieces of fine linen," said Alice; "suppose I cut out a collar for him, and you can make it and stitch it, and then Margery will starch and iron it for you, all ready to give to him. How will that do? Can you stitch well enough?"

"O yes, I guess I can," said Ellen. "O thank you, dear Alice! you are the best help that ever was. Will he like that, do you think?"

"I am sure he will—very much."

"Then that will do nicely," said Ellen, much relieved. "And now what do you think about Nancy's Bible?"

"Nothing could be better, only that I am afraid Nancy would either sell it for something else, or let it go to destruction very quickly. I never heard of her spending five minutes over a book, and the Bible, I am afraid, last of all."

"But I think," said Ellen slowly, "I think she would not spoil it or sell it either, if *I* gave it to her."

And she told Alice about Nancy's asking for the kiss last night.

"That's the most hopeful thing I have heard about Nancy for a long time," said Alice. "We will get her the Bible by all means, my dear,—a nice one,—and I hope you will be able to persuade her to read it."

She rose as she spoke, and went to the glass door. Ellen followed her, and they looked out into the night. It was very dark. She opened the door a moment, but the wind drove the snow into their faces, and they were glad to shut it again.

"It's almost as bad as the night we were out, isn't it?" said Ellen.

"Not such a heavy fall of snow I think, but it is very windy and cold. Papa will be late getting home."

"I am sorry you are worried, dear Alice."

"I am not *much* worried, love. I have often known papa out late before, but this is rather a hard night for a long walk. Come, we'll try to make a good use of the time while we are waiting. Suppose you read to me while I work."

She took down a volume of Cowper and found his account of the three pet hares. Ellen read it, and then several of his smaller pieces of poetry. Then followed a long talk about hares and other animals; about Cowper and his friends and his way of life. Time passed swiftly away; it was getting late.

"How weary papa will be," said Alice; "he has had nothing to eat since dinner. I'll tell you what we'll do, Ellen," she exclaimed as she threw her work down, "we'll make some chocolate for him—that'll be the very thing. Ellen, dear, run into the kitchen and ask Margery to bring me the little chocolate pot and a pitcher of night's milk."

Margery brought them. The pot was set on the coals, and Alice had cut up the chocolate that it might melt the quicker. Ellen watched it with great interest, till it was melted, and the boiling water stirred in, and the whole was simmering quietly on the coals.

"Is it done now?"

"No, it must boil a little while, and then the milk must be put in, and when that has boiled, the eggs—and then it will be done."

With Margery and the chocolate pot the cat had walked in. Ellen immediately endeavored to improve his acquaintance; that was not so easy. The Captain chose the corner

of the rug furthest from her, in spite of all her calling and coaxing, paying her no more attention than if he had not heard her. Ellen crossed over to him and began most tenderly and respectfully to stroke his head and back, touching his soft fur with great care. Parry presently lifted up his head uneasily, as much as to say, "I wonder how long this is going to last,"—and finding there was every prospect of its lasting some time, he fairly got up and walked over to the other end of the rug. Ellen followed him and tried again, with exactly the same effect.

"Well cat! you aren't very kind," said she at length;—"Alice, he won't let me have anything to do with him!"

"I am sorry, my dear, he is so unsociable; he is a cat of very bad taste—that is all I can say."

"But I never saw such a cat! he won't let me touch him ever so softly; he lifts up his head and looks as cross!—and then walks off."

"He don't know you yet, and truth is, Parry has no fancy for extending the circle of his acquaintance. O kitty, kitty!" said Alice, fondly stroking his head, "why don't you behave better?"

Parry lifted his head, and opened and shut his eyes, with an expression of great satisfaction very different from that he had bestowed on Ellen. Ellen gave him up for the present as a hopeless case, and turned her attention to the chocolate, which had now received the milk and must be watched lest it should run over, which Alice said it would very easily do when once it began to boil again. Meanwhile Ellen wanted to know what chocolate was made of—where it came from—where it was made best,—burning her little face in the fire all the time lest the pot should boil over while she was not looking. At last the chocolate began to gather a rich froth, and Ellen called out,

"Oh Alice! look here quick! here's the shape of the spoon on the top of the chocolate! do look at it."

An iron spoon was in the pot, and its shape was distinctly raised on the smooth frothy surface. As they were both bending forward to watch it, Alice waiting to take the pot off the moment it began to boil, Ellen heard a slight click of the lock of the door, and turning her head was a little startled to see a stranger there, standing still at the far end of the room.

She touched Alice's arm without looking round. But Alice started to her feet with a slight scream, and in another minute had thrown her arms round the stranger and was locked in his. Ellen knew what it meant now very well. She turned away as if she had nothing to do with what was going on there, and lifted the pot of chocolate off the fire with infinite difficulty; but it was going to boil over, and she would have broken her back rather than not do it. And then she stood with her back to the brother and sister, looking into the fire, as if she was determined not to see them till she couldn't help it. But what she was thinking of, Ellen could not have told, then or afterward. It was but a few minutes, though it seemed to her a great many, before they drew near the fire. Curiosity began to be strong, and she looked round to see if the new comer was like Alice. No, not a bit,—how different!—darker hair and eyes—not a bit like her; handsome enough, too, to be her brother. And Alice did not look like herself; her usually calm sweet face was quivering and sparkling now,—lit up as Ellen had never seen it,—oh how bright! Poor Ellen herself had never looked duller in her life; and when Alice said gayly, "This is my brother, Ellen,"—her confusion of thoughts and feelings resolved themselves into a flood of tears; she sprang and hid her face in Alice's arms.

Ellen's were not the only eyes that were full just then, but of course she didn't know that.

"Come Ellen," whispered Alice presently, "look up!—what kind of a welcome is this? come!—we have no business with tears just now,—won't you run into the kitchen for me, love," she added more low, "and ask Margery to bring some bread and butter, and anything else she has that is fit for a traveler?"

Glad of an escape, Ellen darted away that her wet face might not be seen. The brother and sister were busily talking when she returned.

"John," said Alice, "this is my little sister that I wrote you about—Ellen Montgomery. Ellen, this is your brother as well as mine, you know."

"Stop! stop!" said her brother. "Miss Ellen, this sister of mine is giving us away to each other at a great rate,—I

should like to know first what you say to it. Are you willing to take a strange brother upon her recommendation?"

Half inclined to laugh, Ellen glanced at the speaker's face, but meeting the grave though somewhat comical look of two very keen eyes, she looked down again, and merely answered "yes."

"Then if I am to be your brother you must give me a brother's right, you know," said he, drawing her gently to him, and kissing her gravely on the lips.

Probably Ellen thought there was a difference between John Humphreys and Mr. Van Brunt, or the young gentlemen of the apple-paring; for though she colored a good deal, she made no objection and showed no displeasure. Alice and she now busied themselves with getting the cups and saucers out of the cupboard, and setting the table; but all that evening, through whatever was doing, Ellen's eyes sought the stranger as if by fascination. She watched him whenever she could without being noticed. At first she was in doubt what to think of him; she was quite sure from that one look into his eyes that he was a person to be feared; —there was no doubt of that; as to the rest she didn't know.

"And what have my two sisters been doing to spend the evening?" said John Humphreys, one time that Alice was gone into the kitchen on some kind errand for him.

"Talking, sir,"—said Ellen doubtfully.

"Talking! this whole evening? Alice must have improved. What have you been talking about?"

"Hares—and dogs—and about Mr. Cowper—and some other things, ——"

"Private affairs, eh?" said he, with again the look Ellen had seen before.

"Yes sir," said Ellen, nodding and laughing.

"And how came you upon Mr. Cowper?"

"Sir?"

"How came you to be talking about Mr. Cowper?"

"I was reading about his hares, and about John Gilpin; and then Alice told me about Mr. Cowper and his friends."

"Well I don't know after all that you have had a pleasanter evening than I have had," said her questioner, "though I have been riding hard, with the cold wind in

my face, and the driving snow doing all it could to discomfit me. I have had this very bright fireside before me all the way."

He fell into a fit of grave musing which lasted till Alice came in. Then suddenly fell a fumbling in his pocket.

"Here's a note for you," said he, throwing it into her lap.

"A note!—Sophia Marshman!—where did you get it?"

"From her own hand. Passing there to-day I thought I must stop a moment to speak to them, and had no notion of doing more; but Mrs. Marshman was very kind, and Miss Sophia in despair, so the end of it was I dismounted and went in to await the preparing of that billet, while my poor nag was led off to the stables and a fresh horse supplied me,—I fancy that tells you on what conditions.

"Charming!" said Alice, "to spend Christmas,—I am very glad; I should like to very much—with you dear. If I can only get papa—but I think he will; it will do him a great deal of good. To-morrow, she says, we must come; but I doubt the weather will not let us; we shall see."

"I rode Prince Charlie down. He is a good traveler, and the sleighing will be fine if the snow be not too deep. The old sleigh is in being yet, I suppose?"

"O yes! in good order. Ellen what are you looking so grave about? you are going too."

"I!" said Ellen, a great spot of crimson coming in each cheek.

"To be sure; do you think I am going to leave you behind?"

"But—"

"But what?"

"There won't be room."

"Room in the sleigh? Then we'll put John on Prince Charlie, and let him ride there, postilion-fashion."

"But—Mr. Humphreys?"

"He always goes on horseback; he will ride Sharp or old John."

In great delight Ellen gave Alice an earnest kiss; and then they all gathered round the table to take their chocolate, or rather to see John take his, which his sister would not let him wait for any longer. The storm had ceased, and through the broken clouds the moon and stars were looking out, so they were

no more uneasy for Mr. Humphreys and expected him every moment. Still the supper was begun and ended without him, and they had drawn round the fire again before his welcome step was at last heard.

There was new joy then; new embracing, and questioning and answering; the little circle opened to let him in; and Alice brought the corner of the table to his side, and poured him out a cup of hot chocolate. But after drinking half of it, and neglecting the eatables beside him, he sat with one hand in the other, his arm leaning on his knee, with a kind of softened gravity upon his countenance.

"Is your chocolate right papa?" said Alice at length.

"*Very* good, my daughter!"—

He finished the cup, but then went back to his old attitude and look. Gradually they ceased their conversation, and waited with respectful affection and some curiosity for him to speak; something of more than common interest seemed to be in his thoughts. He sat looking earnestly in the fire, sometimes with almost a smile on his face, and gently striking one hand in the palm of the other. And sitting so, without moving or stirring his eyes, he said at last, as though the words had been forced from him, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

As he added no more, Alice said gently, "What have you seen to-night papa?"

He roused himself and pushed the empty cup towards her.

"A little more, my daughter;—I have seen the fairest sight, almost, a man can see in this world. I have seen a little ransomed spirit go home to its rest. Oh, that 'unspeakable gift!'"—

He pressed his lips thoughtfully together while he stirred his chocolate; but having drunk it he pushed the table from him and drew up his chair.

"You had a long way to go, papa," observed Alice again.

"Yes—a long way there—I don't know what it was coming home; I never thought of it. How independent the spirit can be of externals! I scarcely felt the storm to-night."

"Nor I," said his son.

"I had a long way to go," said Mr. Humphreys; "that poor woman—that Mrs. Dolan—she lives in the woods behind the Cat's Back, a mile beyond Carra-carra, or more—it

seemed a long mile to-night; and a more miserable place I never saw yet. A little ricketty shanty, the storm was hardly kept out of it, and no appearance of comfort or nicety anywhere or in anything. There were several men gathered round the fire, and in a corner, on a miserable kind of bed, I saw the sick child. His eye met mine the moment I went in, and I thought I had seen him before, but couldn't at first make out where. Do you remember, Alice, a little ragged boy, with a remarkably bright pleasant face, who has planted himself regularly every Sunday morning for some time past in the south aisle of the church, and stood there all service time?"

Alice said no.

"I have noticed him often, and noticed him as paying a most fixed and steady attention. I have repeatedly tried to catch him on his way out of church, to speak to him, but always failed. I asked him to-night, when I first went in, if he knew me. 'I do, sir,' he said. I asked him where he had seen me. He said, 'In the church beyant.' 'So,' said I, 'you are the little boy I have seen there so regularly; what did you come there for?'

"'To hear yer honor spake the good words.'

"'What good words?' said I; 'about what?'

"He said, 'About Him that was slain and washed us from our sins in his own blood.'

"'And do you think he has washed away yours?' I said.

"He smiled at me very expressively. I suppose it was somewhat difficult for him to speak; and to tell the truth so it was for me, for I was taken by surprise; but the people in the hut had gathered round, and I wished to hear him say more, for their sake as well as my own. I asked him why he thought his sins were washed away. He gave me for answer part of the verse, 'Suffer little children to come unto me,' but did not finish it. 'Do you think you are very sick John?' I asked.

"'I am sir,' he said,—'I'll not be long here.'

"'And where do you think you are going then?' said I.

"He lifted one little thin bony arm from under his coverlid, and through all the dirt and pallor of his face the smile of heaven I am sure was on it, as he looked and pointed upward and answered, 'Jesus!'

"I asked him presently, as soon as I could, what he had wished to see me for. I don't know whether he heard me or not; he lay with his eyes half closed, breathing with difficulty. I doubted whether he would speak again; and indeed, for myself, I had heard and seen enough to satisfy me entirely;—for the sake of the group around the bed I could have desired something further. They kept perfect stillness; awed, I think, by a profession of faith such as they had never heard before. They and I stood watching him, and at the end of a few minutes, not more than ten or fifteen, he opened his eyes and with sudden life and strength rose up half way in bed, exclaiming, 'Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!'—and then fell back—just dead."

The old gentleman's voice was husky as he finished, for Alice and Ellen were both weeping, and John Humphreys had covered his face with his hands.

"I have felt," said the old gentleman presently,—"as if I could have shouted out his words—his dying words—all the way as I came home. My little girl," said he, drawing Ellen to him, "do you know the meaning of those sweet things of which little John Dolan's mind was so full?"

Ellen did not speak.

"Do you know what it is to be a sinner?—and what it is to be a forgiven child of God?"

"I believe I do, sir," Ellen said.

He kissed her forehead and blessed her; and then said, "Let us pray."

It was late; the servants had gone to bed, and they were alone. Oh what a thanksgiving Mr. Humphreys poured forth for that "unspeakable gift;"—that they, every one there, had been made to know and rejoice in it; for the poor little boy, rich in faith, who had just gone home in the same rejoicing; for their own loved ones who were there already; and for the hope of joining them soon in safety and joy, to sing with them the "new song" for ever and ever.

There were no dry eyes in the room. And when they arose, Mr. Humphreys, after giving his daughter the usual kiss for good night, gave one to Ellen too, which he had never done before, and then going to his son and laying both hands on his shoulders, kissed his cheek also; then silently took his candle and went.

They lingered a little while after he was gone, standing round the fire as if loth to part, but in grave silence, each busy with his own thoughts. Alice's ended by fixing on her brother, for laying her hand and her head caressingly on his shoulder she said, "And so you have been well all this time, John?"

He turned his face towards her without speaking, but Ellen as well as his sister saw the look of love with which he answered her question, rather of endearment than inquiry; and from that minute Ellen's mind was made up as to the doubt which had troubled her. She went to bed quite satisfied that her new brother was a decided acquisition

CHAPTER XXVII.

The night was winter in his roughest mood,
The morning sharp and clear. . . . . .
. . . . . The vault is blue
Without a cloud, and white without a speck
The dazzling splendor of the scene below.

COWPER.

BEFORE Ellen's eyes were open the next morning—almost before she awoke—the thought of the Christmas visit, the sleigh-ride, John Humphreys, and the weather, all rushed into her mind at once; and started her half up in the bed to look out of the window. Well frosted the panes of glass were, but at the corners and edges unmistakeable bright gleams of light came in.

"O Alice, it's beautiful!" exclaimed Ellen; "look how the sun is shining! and 'tisn't very cold. Are we going to-day?"

"I don't know yet Ellie, but we shall know very soon. We'll settle that at breakfast."

At breakfast it was settled. They were to go, and set off directly. Mr. Humphreys could not go with them, because he had promised to bury little John Dolan; the priest had declared *he* would have nothing to do with it; and the poor mother had applied to Mr. Humphreys, as being the clergyman her child had most trusted and loved to hear. It seemed that little John had persuaded her out of half her prejudices by his affectionate talk and blameless behavior during some time past. Mr. Humphreys therefore must stay at home that day. He promised however to follow them the next, and would by no means permit them to wait for him. He said the day was fine and they must improve it; and he should be pleased to have them with their friends as long as possible.

So the little travelling bag was stuffed, with more things than it seemed possible to get into it. Among the rest Ellen brought her little red Bible, which Alice decided should go in John's pocket;—the little carpet-bag could not take it. Ellen was afraid it never would be locked. By dint of much pushing and crowding however, locked it was; and they made themselves ready. Over Ellen's merino dress and coat went an old fur tippet; a little shawl was tied round her neck; her feet were cased in a pair of warm moccasins, which belonging to Margery were of course a world too big for her, but "anything but cold," as their owner said. Her nice blue hood would protect her head well, and Alice gave her a green veil to save her eyes from the glare of the snow. When Ellen shuffled out of Alice's room in this trim, John gave her one of his grave looks, and saying she looked like Mother Bunch, begged to know how she expected to get to the sleigh; he said she would want a *foot*man indeed to wait upon her, to pick up her slippers, if she went in that fashion. However he ended by picking *her* up, carried her and set her down safely in the sleigh. Alice followed, and in another minute they were off.

Ellen's delight was unbounded. Presently they turned round a corner and left the house behind out of sight; and they were speeding away along a road that was quite new to her. Ellen's heart felt like dancing for joy. Nobody would have thought it, she sat so still and quiet between Alice and her brother; but her eyes were very bright as they looked joyously about her, and every now and then she could not help smiling to herself. Nothing was wanting to the pleasure of that ride. The day was of winter's fairest; the blue sky as clear as if clouds had never dimmed or crossed it. None crossed it now. It was cold, but not bitterly cold, nor windy; the sleigh skimmed along over the smooth frozen surface of the snow as if it was no trouble at all to Prince Charlie to draw it; and the sleigh-bells jingled and rang, the very music for Ellen's thoughts to dance to. And then with somebody she liked very much on each side of her, and pleasures untold in the prospect, no wonder she felt as if her heart could not hold any more. The green veil could not be kept on, everything looked so beautiful in that morning's sun. The long wide slopes of untrodden and unspotted snow, too

bright sometimes for the eye to look at; the shadows that here and there lay upon it, of woodland and scattered trees; the very brown fences, and the bare arms and branches of the leafless trees showing sharp against the white ground and clear bright heaven;—all seemed lovely in her eyes. For

> "It is content of heart
> Gives nature power to please."

She could see nothing that was not pleasant. And besides they were in a nice little red sleigh, with a warm buffalo robe, and Prince Charlie was a fine spirited grey that scarcely ever needed to be touched with the whip; at a word of encouragement from his driver he would toss his head and set forward with new life, making all the bells jingle again. To be sure she would have been just as happy if they had had the poorest of vehicles on runners, with old John instead; but still it was pleasanter so.

Their road at first was through a fine undulating country like that between the Nose and Thirlwall; farmhouses and patches of woodland scattered here and there. It would seem that the minds of all the party were full of the same thoughts, for after a very long silence Alice's first word, almost sigh, was,

"This is a beautiful world, John!"

"Beautiful!—wherever you can escape from the signs of man's presence and influence."

"Isn't that almost too strong?" said Alice.

He shook his head, smiling somewhat sadly, and touched Prince Charlie, who was indulging himself in a walk.

"But there are bright exceptions," said Alice.

"I believe it;—never so much as when I come home."

"Are there none around you then in whom you can have confidence and sympathy?"

He shook his head again. "Not enough, Alice. I long for you every day of my life."

Alice turned her head quick away.

"It must be so, my dear sister," he said presently; "we can never expect to find it otherwise. There are, as you say, bright exceptions,—many of them; but in almost all I find some sad want. We must wait till we join the spirits of the just made perfect, before we see society that will be all we wish for."

"What is Ellen thinking of all this while?" said Alice presently, bending down to see her face. "As grave as a judge!—what are you musing about?"

"I was thinking," said Ellen, "how men could help the world's being beautiful."

"Don't trouble your little head with that question," said John smiling;—"long may it be before you are able to answer it. Look at those snow-birds!"

By degrees the day wore on. About one o'clock they stopped at a farm-house to let the horse rest, and to stretch their own limbs, which Ellen for her part was very glad to do. The people of the house received them with great hospitality and offered them pumpkin pies and sweet cider. Alice had brought a basket of sandwiches, and Prince Charlie was furnished with a bag of corn Thomas had stowed away in the sleigh for him; so they were all well refreshed and rested and warmed before they set off again.

From home to Ventnor, Mr. Marshman's place, was more than thirty miles, and the longest, because the most difficult, part of the way was still before them. Ellen, however, soon became sleepy, from riding in the keen air; she was content now to have the green veil over her face, and sitting down in the bottom of the sleigh, her head leaning against Alice, and covered well with the buffalo robe, she slept in happy unconsciousness of hill and dale, wind and sun, and all the remaining hours of the way.

It was drawing towards four o'clock when Alice with some difficulty roused her to see the approach to the house and get wide awake before they should reach it. They turned from the road and entered by a gateway into some pleasure-grounds, through which a short drive brought them to the house. These grounds were fine, but the wide lawns were a smooth spread of snow now; the great skeletons of oaks and elms were bare and wintry; and patches of shrubbery offered little but tufts and bunches of brown twigs and stems. It might have looked dreary, but that some well-grown evergreens were clustered round the house, and others scattered here and there relieved the eye;—a few holly bushes, singly and in groups, proudly displayed their bright dark leaves and red berries;—and one unrivalled hemlock on the west threw its graceful shadow quite across the lawn, on which,

as on itself, the white chimney tops, and the naked branches of oaks and elms, was the faint smile of the afternoon sun.

A servant came to take the horse, and Ellen, being first rid of her moccasins, went with John and Alice up the broad flight of steps and into the house. They entered a large handsome square hall with a blue and white stone floor, at one side of which the staircase went winding up. Here they were met by a young lady, very lively and pleasant-faced, who threw her arms round Alice and kissed her a great many times, seeming very glad indeed to see her. She welcomed Ellen too with such warmth that she began to feel almost as if she had been sent for and expected; told Mr. John he had behaved admirably; and then led them into a large room where was a group of ladies and gentlemen.

The welcome they got here was less lively but quite as kind. Mr. and Mrs. Marshman were fine handsome old people, of stately presence, and most dignified as well as kind in their deportment. Ellen saw that Alice was at home here, as if she had been a daughter of the family. Mrs. Marshman also stooped down and kissed herself, telling her she was very glad she had come, and that there were a number of young people there who would be much pleased to have her help them keep Christmas. Ellen could not make out yet who any of the rest of the company were. John and Alice seemed to know them all, and there was a buzz of pleasant voices and a great bustle of shaking hands.

The children had all gone out to walk, and as they had had their dinner a great while ago it was decided that Ellen should take hers that day with the elder part of the family. While they were waiting to be called to dinner, and everybody else was talking and laughing, old Mr. Marshman took notice of little Ellen, and drawing her from Alice's side to his own, began a long conversation. He asked her a great many questions, some of them such funny ones that she could not help laughing, but she answered them all, and now and then so that she made him laugh too. By the time the butler came to say dinner was ready she had almost forgotten she was a stranger. Mr. Marshman himself led her to the dining-room, begging the elder ladies would excuse him, but he felt bound to give his attention to the greatest stranger in the company. He placed her on his right hand and took the

greatest care of her all dinner-time; once sending her plate the whole length of the table for some particular little thing he thought she would like. On the other side of Ellen sat Mrs. Chauncey, one of Mr. Marshman's daughters; a lady with a sweet, gentle, quiet, face and manner that made Ellen like to sit by her. Another daughter, Mrs. Gillespie, had more of her mother's stately bearing; the third, Miss Sophia, who met them first in the hall, was very unlike both the others, but lively and agreeable and good-humored.

Dinner gave place to the dessert, and that in its turn was removed with the cloth. Ellen was engaged in munching almonds and raisins, admiring the brightness of the mahogany, and the richly cut and colored glass, and silver decanter stands, which were reflected in it; when a door at the further end of the room half opened, a little figure came partly in, and holding the door in her hand stood looking doubtfully along the table, as if seeking for some one.

"What is the matter, Ellen?" said Mrs. Chauncey.

"Mrs. Bland told me,—mamma,—" she began, her eye not ceasing its uneasy quest, but then breaking off and springing to Alice's side she threw her arms around her neck, and gave her certainly the warmest of all the warm welcomes she had had that day.

"Hallo!" cried Mr. Marshman rapping on the table; "that's too much for any one's share. Come here, you baggage, and give me just such another."

The little girl came near accordingly and hugged and kissed him with a very good will, remarking however, "Ah but I've seen you before to-day, grandpapa!"

"Well here's somebody you've not seen before," said he good-humoredly, pulling her round to Ellen,—"here's a new friend for you,—a young lady from the great city, so you must brush up your country manners—Miss Ellen Montgomery, come from—pshaw! what is it?—come from—"

"London, grandpapa?" said the little girl, as with a mixture of simplicity and kindness she took Ellen's hand and kissed her on the cheek.

"From Carra-carra, sir?" said Ellen smiling.

"Go along with you," said he, laughing and pinching her cheek. "Take her away, Ellen, take her away, and mind you

take good care of her. Tell Mrs. Bland she is one of grandpapa's guests."

The two children had not however reached the door when Ellen Chauncey exclaimed, "Wait, oh! wait a minute! I must speak to aunt Sophia about the bag." And flying to her side there followed an earnest whispering, and then a nod and smile from aunt Sophia; and satisfied, Ellen returned to her companion and led her out of the dining-room.

"We have both got the same name," said she as they went along a wide corridor; "how shall we know which is which?"

"Why," said Ellen laughing, "when you say Ellen I shall know you mean me, and when I say it you will know I mean you. I shouldn't be calling myself, you know."

"Yes, but when somebody else calls Ellen, we shall both have to run. Do you run when you are called?"

"Sometimes," said Ellen laughing.

"Ah, but I do always; mamma always makes me. I thought perhaps you were like Marianne Gillespie—she waits often as much as half a minute before she stirs when anybody calls her. Did you come with Miss Alice?"

"Yes."

"Do you love her?"

"Very much!—oh very much!"

Little Ellen looked at her companion's rising color with a glance of mixed curiosity and pleasure in which lay a strong promise of growing love.

"So do I," she answered gayly; "I am very glad she is come, and I am very glad you are come, too."

The little speaker pushed open a door and led Ellen into the presence of a group of young people rather older than themselves.

"Marianne," said she to one of them, a handsome girl of fourteen, "this is Miss Ellen Montgomery—she came with Alice, and she is come to keep Christmas with us—aren't you glad? There'll be quite a parcel of us when what's-her-name comes—won't there?"

Marianne shook hands with Ellen,

"She is one of grandpapa's guests, I can tell you," said little Ellen Chauncey; "and he says we must brush up our country manners—she's come from the great city."

"Do you think we are a set of ignoramuses, Miss Ellen?" inquired a well-grown boy of fifteen, who looked enough like Marianne Gillespie to prove him her brother.

"I don't know what that is," said Ellen.

"Well, do they do things better in the great city than we do here?"

"I don't know how you do them here," said Ellen.

"Don't you?—Come! Stand out of my way, right and left, all of you, will you? and give me a chance. Now then!"

Conscious that he was amusing most of the party, he placed himself gravely at a little distance from Ellen, and marching solemnly up to her bowed down to her knees—then slowly raising his head stepped back.

"Miss Ellen Montgomery, I am rejoiced to have the pleasure of seeing you at Ventnor.—Isn't that polite now? Is that like what you have been accustomed to, Miss Montgomery?"

"No sir—thank you," said Ellen, who laughed in spite of herself. The mirth of the others redoubled.

"May I request to be informed then," continued Gillespie, "what is the fashion of making bows in the great city?"

"I don't know," said Ellen; "I never saw a boy make a bow before."

"Humph!—I guess country manners will do for you," said William, turning on his heel.

"You're giving her a pretty specimen of 'em Bill," said another boy.

"For shame, William!" cried little Ellen Chauncey;—didn't I tell you she was one of grandpapa's guests? Come here Ellen, I'll take you somewhere else."

She seized Ellen's hand and pulled her towards the door, but suddenly stopped again.

"O I forgot to tell you!" she said,—"I asked aunt Sophia about the bag of moroccos, and she said we should have 'em early to-morrow-morning, and then we can divide 'em right away."

"We mustn't divide 'em till Maggie comes," said Marianne.

"O no—not till Maggie comes," said little Ellen; and then ran off again.

"I am so glad you are come," said she;—"the others are all so much older, and they have all so much to do together

—and now you can help me think what I will make for mamma. Hush! don't say a word about it!"

They entered the large drawing-room where old and young were gathered for tea. The children who had dined early sat down to a well spread table at which Miss Sophia presided; the elder persons were standing or sitting in different parts of the room. Ellen not being hungry had leisure to look about her, and her eye soon wandered from the tea-table in search of her old friends. Alice was sitting by Mrs. Marshman, talking with two other ladies; but Ellen smiled presently as she caught her eye from the far end of the room and got a little nod of recognition. John came up just then to set down his coffee-cup, and asked her what she was smiling at.

"That's city manners," said William Gillespie, "to laugh at what's going on."

"I have no doubt we shall all follow the example," said John Humphreys gravely, "if the young gentleman will try to give us a smile.

The young gentleman had just accommodated himself with an outrageously large mouthful of bread and sweetmeats, and if ever so well disposed, compliance with the request was impossible. None of the rest however, not even his sister, could keep their countenances, for the eye of the speaker had pointed and sharpened his words; and William very red in the face was understood to mumble, as soon as mumbling was possible, that "he wouldn't laugh unless he had a mind to," and a threat to "do something" to his tormenter.

"Only not eat me," said John, with a shade of expression in his look and tone which overcame the whole party, himself and poor William alone retaining entire gravity.

"What's all this? what's all this?—what's all this laughing about?" said old Mr. Marshman coming up.

"This young gentleman, sir," said John, "has been endeavoring—with a mouthful of arguments—to prove to us the inferiority of city manners to those learned in the country."

"Will?" said the old gentleman, glancing doubtfully at William's discomfited face; then added sternly, "I don't care where your manners were learnt, sir, but I advise you to be very particular as to the sort you bring with you here. Now Sophia let us have some music."

He sat the children a dancing, and as Ellen did not know how, he kept her by him, and kept her very much amused too, in his own way; then he would have her join in the dancing and bade Ellen Chauncey give her lessons. There was a little backwardness at first, and then Ellen was jumping away with the rest and thinking it perfectly delightful, as Miss Sophia's piano rattled out merry jigs and tunes, and little feet flew over the floor as light as the hearts they belonged to. At eight o'clock the young ones were dismissed, and bade good night to their elders; and pleased with the kind kiss Mrs. Marshman had given her as well as her little granddaughter, Ellen went off to bed very happy.

The room to which her companion led her was the very picture of comfort. It was not too large, furnished with plain old-fashioned furniture, and lighted and warmed by a cheerful wood-fire. The very old brass-headed andirons that stretched themselves out upon the hearth with such a look of being at home, seemed to say, "You have come to the right place for comfort." A little dark mahogany book-case in one place—an odd toilet table of the same stuff in another; and opposite the fire an old-fashioned high-post bedstead with its handsome Marseilles quilt and ample pillows looked very tempting. Between this and the far side of the room, in the corner, another bed was spread on the floor.

"This is aunt Sophia's room," said little Ellen Chauncey; —this is where you are to sleep."

"And where will Alice be?" said the other Ellen.

"O she'll sleep here, in this bed, with aunt Sophia; that is because the house is so full, you know;—and here is your bed, here on the floor. O delicious! I wish I was going to sleep here. Don't you love to sleep on the floor? I do. I think it's fun."

Anybody might have thought it fun to sleep on that bed, for instead of a bedstead it was luxuriously piled on mattresses. The two children sat down together on the foot of it.

"This is aunt Sophia's room," continued little Ellen, "and next to it, out of that door, is our dressing-room, and next to that is where mamma and I sleep. Do you undress and dress yourself?"

"To be sure I do," said Ellen,—"always."

"So do I; but Marianne Gillespie won't even put on her shoes and stockings for herself."

"Who does it then?" said Ellen.

"Why Lester—aunt Matilda's maid. Mamma sent away her maid when we came here, and she says if she had fifty she would like me to do everything I can for myself. I shouldn't think it was pleasant to have any one put on one's shoes and stockings for you, should you?"

"No indeed," said Ellen. "Then you live here all the time."

"O yes—ever since papa didn't come back from that long voyage—we live here since then."

"Is he coming back soon?"

"No," said little Ellen gravely,—"he never come back—he never will come back any more."

Ellen was sorry she had asked, and both children were silent for a minute.

"I'll tell you what!" said little Ellen jumping up,—"mamma said we mustn't sit up too long talking, so I'll run and get my things and bring 'em here, and we can undress together; won't that be a nice way?"

CHAPTER XXVIII

He that loses anything, and gets wisdom by it, is a gainer by the loss.
L'ESTRANGE.

LEFT alone in the strange room with the flickering fire, how quickly Ellen's thoughts left Ventnor and flew over the sea. They often traveled that road it is true, but now perhaps the very home look of everything, where yet *she* was not at home, might have sent them. There was a bitter twinge or two, and for a minute Ellen's head drooped. "To-morrow will be Christmas eve—last Christmas eve—oh mamma!"

Little Ellen Chauncey soon came back, and sitting down beside her on the foot of the bed began the business of undressing.

"Don't you love Christmas time?" said she; "I think it's the pleasantest in all the year; we always have a houseful of people, and such fine times. But then in summer I think *that's* the pleasantest. I s'pose they're all pleasant. Do you hang up your stocking?"

"No," said Ellen.

"Don't you! why I always did ever since I can remember. I used to think, when I was a little girl you know," said she laughing,—"I used to think that Santa Claus came down the chimney, and I used to hang up my stocking as near the fireplace as I could; but I know better than that now; I don't care where I hang it. You know who Santa Claus is, don't you?"

"He's nobody," said Ellen.

"O yes he is—he's a great many people—he's whoever gives you anything. *My* Santa Claus is mamma, and grandpapa, and grandmamma, and aunt Sophia, and aunt Matilda; and I thought I should have had uncle George too this Christmas, but he couldn't come. Uncle Howard never gives

me anything. I am sorry uncle George couldn't come; I like him the best of all my uncles."

"I never had anybody but mamma to give me presents," said Ellen, "and she never gave me much more at Christmass than at other times."

"I used to have presents from mamma and grandpapa too, both Christmas and New Year, but now I have grown so old mamma only gives me something Christmas and grandpapa only New Year. It would be too much, you know, for me to have both when my presents are so big. I don't believe a stocking will hold 'em much longer. But O! we've got such a fine plan in our heads," said little Ellen, lowering her voice and speaking with open eyes and great energy,—"*we* are going to make presents this year!—we children—won't it be fine?—we are going to make what we like for anybody we choose, and let nobody know anything about it; and then New Year's morning, you know, when the things are all under the napkins we will give ours to somebody to put where they belong, and nobody will know anything about them till they see them there. Won't it be fine? I'm so glad you are here, for I want you to tell me what I shall make."

"Who is it for?" said Ellen.

"O mamma; you know I can't make for everybody, so I think I had rather it should be for mamma. I *thought* of making her a needlebook with white backs, and getting Gilbert Gillespie to paint them—he can paint beautifully,—and having her name and something else written very nicely inside—how do you think that would do?"

"I should think it would do very nicely," said Ellen,—"very nicely indeed."

"I wish uncle George was at home though to write it for me,—he writes so beautifully; I can't do it well enough."

"I am afraid I can't either," said Ellen. "Perhaps somebody else can."

"I don't know who. Aunt Sophia scribbles and scratches, and besides I don't want her to know anything about it. But there's another thing I don't know how to fix, and that's the edges of the leaves—the leaves for the needles—they must be fixed—somehow."

"I can show you how to do that," said Ellen brightening;

"mamma had a needlebook that was given to her that had the edges beautifully fixed; and I wanted to know how it was done, and she showed me. I'll show you that. It takes a good while, but that's no matter."

"O thank you; how nice that is. O no that's no matter. And then it will do very well, won't it? Now if I can only catch Gilbert in a good humor—he isn't my cousin—he's Marianne's cousin—that big boy you saw down stairs—he's so big he won't have anything to say to me sometimes, but I guess I'll get him to do this. Don't you want to make something for somebody?"

Ellen *had* had one or two feverish thoughts on this subject since the beginning of the conversation; but she only said,—

"It's no matter—you know I haven't got anything here; and besides I shall not be here till New Year."

"Not here till New Year! yes you shall," said little Ellen, throwing herself upon her neck; "indeed you aren't going away before that. I *know* you aren't—I heard grandmamma and aunt Sophia talking about it. Say you will stay here till New Year—do!"

"I should like to very much indeed," said Ellen, "if Alice does."

In the midst of half a dozen kisses with which her little companion rewarded this speech, somebody close by said pleasantly,—

"What time of night do you suppose it is?"

The girls started;—there was Mrs. Chauncey.

"O, mamma," exclaimed her little daughter, springing to her feet, "I hope you haven't heard what we have been talking about?"

"Not a word," said Mrs. Chauncey, smiling, "but as to-morrow will be long enough to talk in, hadn't you better go to bed now?"

Her daughter obeyed her immediately, after one more hug to Ellen and telling her she was *so* glad she had come. Mrs. Chauncey stayed to see Ellen in bed and press one kind motherly kiss upon her face, so tenderly that Ellen's eyes were moistened as she withdrew. But in her dreams that night the rosy sweet face, blue eyes, and little plump figure of Ellen Chauncey played the greatest part.

She slept till Alice was obliged to waken her the next

morning; and then got up with her head in a charming confusion of pleasures past and pleasures to come,—things known and unknown to be made for everybody's New Year presents,—linen collars and painted needlebooks; and no sooner was breakfast over than she was showing and explaining to Ellen Chauncey a particularly splendid and mysterious way of embroidering the edges of needlebook leaves. Deep in this they were still an hour afterwards, and in the comparative merits of purple and rose-color, when a little hubbub arose at the other end of the room on the arrival of a new-comer. Ellen Chauncey looked up from her work, then dropped it, exclaiming, "There she is!—now for the bag!"—and pulled Ellen along with her towards the party. A young lady was in the midst of it, talking so fast that she had not time to take off her cloak and bonnet. As her eye met Ellen's however she came to a sudden pause. It was Margaret Dunscombe. Ellen's face certainly showed no pleasure; Margaret's darkened with a very disagreeable surprise.

"My goodness!—Ellen Montgomery!—how on earth did you get *here?*"

"Do you know her?" asked one of the girls, as the two Ellens went off after "aunt Sophia."

"Do I know her? Yes—just enough,—exactly. How did she get here?"

"Miss Humphreys brought her."

"Who's Miss Humphreys?"

"Hush!" said Marianne, lowering her tone,—"that's her brother in the window."

"Whose brother?—her's or Miss Humphreys'?"

"Miss Humphreys. Did you never see her? she is here, or has been here, a great deal of the time. Grandma calls her her fourth daughter; and she is just as much at home as if she was; and she brought her here."

"And she's at home too, I suppose. Well, it's no business of mine."

"What do you know of her?"

"O, enough—that's just it—don't want to know any more."

"Well you needn't; but what's the matter with her?"

"O I don't know—I'll tell you some other time—she's a conceited little piece. We had the care of her coming up the

river, that's how I come to know about her; 'ma said it was the last child she would be bothered with in that way."

Presently the two girls came back, bringing word to clear the table, for aunt Sophia was coming with the moroccos. As soon as she came Ellen Chauncey sprang to her neck and whispered an earnest question. "Certainly!" aunt Sophia said, as she poured out the contents of the bag; and her little niece delightedly told Ellen *she* was to have her share as well as the rest.

The table was now strewn with pieces of morocco of all sizes and colors, which were hastily turned over and examined with eager hands and sparkling eyes. Some were mere scraps, to be sure; but others showed a breadth and length of beauty which was declared to be "first-rate," and "fine;" and one beautiful large piece of blue morocco in particular was made up in imagination by two or three of the party in as many different ways. Marianne wanted it for a book-cover; Margaret declared she could make a lovely reticule with it; and Ellen could not help thinking it would make a very pretty needlebox, such a one as she had seen in the possession of one of the girls, and longed to make for Alice.

"Well, what's to be done now?" said Miss Sophia,—"or am I not to know?"

"O you're not to know—you're not to know, aunt Sophy," cried the girls;—"you mustn't ask."

"I'll tell you what they are going to do with 'em," said George Walsh, coming up to her with a mischievous face, and adding in a loud whisper, shielding his mouth with his hand,—"they're going to make pr——"

He was laid hold of forcibly by the whole party screaming and laughing, and stopped short from finishing his speech.

"Well then I'll take my departure," said Miss Sophia;—"but how will you manage to devide all these scraps?"

"Suppose we were to put them in the bag again, and you hold the bag, and we were to draw them out without looking," said Ellen Chauncey,—"as we used to do with the sugar-plums."

As no better plan was thought of this was agreed upon; and little Ellen shutting up her eyes very tight stuck in her hand and pulled out a little bit of green morocco about the size of a dollar. Ellen Montgomery came next; then Mar-

garet, then Marianne, then their mutual friend Isabel Hawthorn. Each had to take her turn a great many times; and at the end of the drawing the pieces were found to be pretty equally divided among the party, with the exception of Ellen, who besides several other good pieces had drawn the famous blue.

"That will do very nicely," said little Ellen Chauncey;—"I am glad you have got that Ellen. Now aunt Sophy!—one thing more—you know the silks and ribbons you promised us."

"Bless me! I haven't done yet, eh? Well you shall have them, but we are all going out to walk now; I'll give them to you this afternoon. Come! put these away and get on your bonnets and cloaks."

A hard measure! but it was done. After the walk came dinner; after dinner aunt Sophia had to be found and waited on, till she had fairly sought out and delivered to their hands the wished-for bundle of silks and satins. It gave great satisfaction.

"But how shall we do about dividing these?" said little Ellen;—shall we draw lots again?"

"No Ellen," said Marianne, "that won't do, because we might every one get just the thing we do not want. I want one color or stuff to go with my morocco, and you want another to go with yours; and you might get mine and I might get yours. We had best each choose in turn what we like, beginning at Isabel."

"Very well," said little Ellen, "I'm agreed."

"Anything for a quiet life," said George Walsh.

But this business of choosing was found to be very long and very difficult, each one was so fearful of not taking the exact piece she wanted most. The elder members of the family began to gather for dinner, and several came and stood round the table where the children were; little noticed by them, they were so wrapped up in silks and satins. Ellen seemed the least interested person at table, and had made her selections with the least delay and difficulty; and now as it was not her turn sat very soberly looking on with her head resting on her hand.

"I declare it's too vexatious!" said Margaret Dunscombe;—here I've got this beautiful piece of blue satin, and can't

do anything with it; it just matches that blue morocco—it's a perfect match—I could have made a splendid thing of it, and I have got some cord and tassels that would just do—I declare it's too bad!"

Ellen's color changed.

"Well choose, Margaret," said Marianne.

"I don't know what to choose—that's the thing. What can one do with red and purple morocco and blue satin? I might as well give up. I've a great notion to take this piece of yellow satin and dress up a Turkish doll to frighten the next young one I meet with."

"I wish you would, Margaret, and give it to me when it's done," cried little Ellen Chauncey.

"'Taint made yet," said the other dryly.

Ellen's color had changed and changed; her hand twitched nervously, and she glanced uneasily from Margaret's store of finery to her own.

"Come choose, Margaret," said Ellen Chauncey;—"I dare say Ellen wants the blue morocco as much as you do."

"No I don't!" said Ellen abruptly, throwing it over the table to her;—"take it Margaret,—you may have it."

"What do you mean?" said the other astounded.

"I mean you may have it," said Ellen,—"I don't want it."

"Well, I'll tell you what," said the other,—"I'll give you yellow satin for it—or some of my red morocco?"

"No,—I had rather not," repeated Ellen;—"I don't want it—you may have it."

"Very generously done," remarked Miss Sophia; "I hope you'll all take a lesson in the art of being obliging."

"Quite a noble little girl," said Mrs. Gillespie.

Ellen crimsoned. "No ma'am, I am not indeed," she said, looking at them with eyes that were filling fast,—"please don't say so—I don't deserve it."

"I shall say what I think, my dear," said Mrs. Gillespie smiling, "but I am glad you add the grace of modesty to that of generosity; it is the more uncommon of the two."

"I am not modest! I am not generous! you mustn't say so," cried Ellen. She struggled; the blood rushed to the surface, suffusing every particle of skin that could be seen;—then left it, as with eyes cast down she went on—"I don't deserve to be praised,—it was more Margaret's than mine.

I oughtn't to have kept it at all—for I saw a little bit when I put my hand in. I didn't mean to, but I did!"

Raising her eyes hastily to Alice's face, they met those of John, who was standing behind her. She had not counted upon him for one of her listeners; she knew Mrs. Gillespie, Mrs. Chauncey, Miss Sophia, and Alice, had heard her; but this was the one drop too much. Her head sunk; she covered her face a moment, and then made her escape out of the room before even Ellen could follow her.

There was a moment's silence. Alice seemed to have some difficulty not to follow Ellen's example. Margaret pouted; Mrs. Chauncey's eyes filled with tears, and her little daughter seemed divided between doubt and dismay. Her first move however was to run off in pursuit of Ellen. Alice went after her.

"Here's a beautiful example of honor and honesty for you!" said Margaret Dunscombe at length.

"I think it is," observed John quietly.

"An uncommon instance," said Mrs. Chauncey.

"I am glad everybody thinks so," said Margaret sullenly; "I hope I sha'n't copy it, that's all.

"I think you are in no danger," said John again.

"Very well!" said Margaret, who between her desire of speaking and her desire of concealing her vexation did not know what to do with herself;—"everybody must judge for himself I suppose; I've got enough of her, for my part."

"Where did you ever see her before?" said Isabel Hawthorn.

"O she came up the river with us—mamma had to take care of her—she was with us two days."

"And didn't you like her?"

"No, I guess I didn't! she was a perfect plague. All that day on board the steamboat she scarcely came near us; we couldn't pretend to keep sight of her; mamma had to send her maid out to look after her I don't know how many times. She scraped acquaintance with some strange man on board and liked his company better than ours, for she stayed with him the whole blessed day, waking and sleeping; of course mamma didn't like it at all. She didn't go to a single meal with us; you know of course that wasn't proper behavior."

"No indeed," said Isabel.

"I suppose," said John coolly, "she chose the society she thought the pleasantest. Probably Miss Margaret's politeness was more than she had been accustomed to."

Margaret colored, not quite knowing what to make of the speaker or his speech.

"It would take much to make me believe," said gentle Mrs. Chauncey, "that a child of such refined and delicate feeling as that little girl evidently has, could take pleasure in improper company."

Margaret had a reply at her tongue's end, but she had also an uneasy feeling that there were eyes not far off too keen of sight to be baffled; she kept silence till the group dispersed and she had an opportunity of whispering in Marianne's ear that "*that* was the very most disagreeable man she had ever seen in her life."

"What a singular fancy you have taken to this little pet of Alice's, Mr. John," said Mrs. Marshman's youngest daughter. "You quite surprise me."

"Did you think me a misanthrope, Miss Sophia?"

"O no, not at all; but I always had a notion you would not be easily pleased in the choice of favorites."

"*Easily!* When a simple intelligent child of twelve or thirteen is a common character, then I will allow that I am easily pleased."

"Twelve or thirteen!" said Miss Sophia; "what are you thinking about? Alice says she is only ten or eleven."

"In years—perhaps."

"How gravely you take me up!" said the young lady laughing. "My dear Mr. John, 'in years perhaps,' you may call yourself twenty, but in everything else you might much better pass for thirty or forty."

As they were called to dinner Alice and Ellen Chauncey came back; the former looking a little serious, the latter crying, and wishing aloud that all the moroccos had been in the fire. They had not been able to find Ellen. Neither was she in the drawing-room when they returned to it after dinner; and a second search was made in vain. John went to the library which was separate from the other rooms, thinking she might have chosen that for a hiding place. She was not there; but the pleasant light of the room, where only the

fire was burning, invited a stay. He sat down in the deep window, and was musingly looking out into the moonlight, when the door softly opened and Ellen came in. She stole in noiselessly, so that he did not hear her, and *she* thought the room empty; till in passing slowly down toward the fire she came upon him in the window. Her start first let him know she was there; she would have run, but one of her hands was caught, and she could not get it away.

"Running away from your brother, Ellie!" said he kindly; "what is the matter?"

Ellen shrunk from meeting his eye and was silent.

"I know all Ellie," said he, still very kindly,—"I have seen all;—why do you shun me?"

Ellen said nothing; the big tears began to run down her face and frock.

"You are taking this matter too hardly, dear Ellen," he said, drawing her close to him;—"you did wrong, but you have done all you could to repair the wrong;—neither man nor woman can do more than that."

But though encouraged by his manner, the tears flowed faster than ever.

"Where have you been? Alice was looking for you, and little Ellen Chauncey was in great trouble. I don't know what dreadful thing she thought you had done with yourself. Come!—lift up your head and let me see you smile again."

Ellen lifted her head, but could not her eyes, though she tried to smile.

"I want to talk to you a little about this," said he. "You know you gave me leave to be your brother,—will you let me ask you a question or two?"

"O yes—whatever he pleased," Ellen said.

"Then sit down here," said he, making room for her on the wide window-seat, but still keeping hold of her hand and speaking very gently. "You said you saw when you took the morocco—I don't quite understand—how was it?"

"Why," said Ellen, "we were not to look, and we had gone three times round and nobody had got that large piece yet, and we all wanted it; and I did not mean to look at all, but I don't know how it was, just before I shut my eyes I happened to see the corner of it sticking up, and then I took it."

"With your eyes open?"

"No, no, with them shut. And I had scarcely got it when I was sorry for it and wished it back."

"You will wonder at me perhaps, Ellie," said John, "but I am not very sorry this has happened. You are no worse than before;—it has only made you see what you are—very, very weak,—quite unable to keep yourself right without constant help. Sudden temptation was too much for you—so it has many a time been for me, and so it has happened to the best men on earth. I suppose if you had had a minute's time to think you would not have done as you did?"

"No, indeed!" said Ellen. "I was sorry a minute after."

"And I dare say the thought of it weighed upon your mind ever since?"

"Oh yes!" said Ellen;—"it wasn't out of my head a minute the whole day."

"Then let it make you very humble, dear Ellie, and let it make you in future keep close to our dear Saviour, without whose help we cannot stand a moment."

Ellen sobbed; and he allowed her to do so for a few minutes, then said,

"But you have not been thinking much about Him, Ellie."

The sobs ceased; he saw his words had taken hold.

"Is it right," he said softly, "that we should be more troubled about what people will think of us, than for having displeased or dishonored Him?"

Ellen now looked up, and in her look was all the answer he wished.

"You understand me, I see," said he. "Be humbled in the dust before him—the more the better; but whenever we are greatly concerned, for our own sakes, about other people's opinion, we may be sure we are thinking too little of God and what will please him."

"I am very sorry," said poor Ellen, from whose eyes the tears began to drop again,—"I am very wrong—but I could'nt bear to think what Alice would think—and you—and all of them—"

"Here's Alice to speak for herself," said John.

As Alice came up with a quick step and knelt down before her, Ellen sprang to her neck, and they held each other

very fast indeed. John walked up and down the room. Presently he stopped before them.

"All's well again," said Alice, "and we are going in to tea."

He smiled and held out his hand, which Ellen took, but he would not leave the library, declaring they had a quarter of an hour still. So they sauntered up and down the long room, talking of different things, so pleasantly that Ellen near forgot her troubles. Then came in Miss Sophia to find them, and then Mr. Marshman, and Marianne to call them to tea; so the going into the drawing-room was not half so bad as Ellen thought it would be.

She behaved very well; her face was touchingly humble that night; and all the evening she kept fast by either Alice or John, without budging an inch. And as little Ellen Chauncey and her cousin George Walsh chose to be where she was, the young party was quite divided; and not the least merry portion of it was that mixed with the older people. Little Ellen was half beside herself with spirits; the secret of which perhaps was the fact, which she several times in the course of the evening whispered to Ellen as a great piece of news, that "it was Christmas eve!"

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